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Letter to the Editor:

On the Value of Value-Based Purchasing

John Greene*

* National Association of Health Underwriters

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Letter to the Editor: On the Value of Value-Based Purchasing

Dear Dr. Nash,

In response to your March 2005 Editorial on the Value of Value-Based Purchasing, the answer, I would argue is not throwing money at providers, but improving the workflow. Physicians are a dedicated lot upon whom mortals, such as me, depend to make value judgments with input from their patients. In today's healthcare environment, physicians cannot be expected to recall every fact and detail. Information technology can help. Voice recognition technology to record notes at bedside, for instance, would curtail time, and hand held PDAs to send prescription information and get lab reports can be efficient, reduce errors and duplication.

What does technology have to do with value judgments? The Hippocratic oath to "do no harm" would suggest that to not use those means and methods that produce the least harm and results in the best outcomes would be contrary to the oath. The healthcare debate always includes a caveat that speculates what physician reaction will be to efforts to change their practice behavior. The answer is typically to pay them to comply. I don't believe solutions are a question of carrot and stick, but of professional ethics and moral hazard. Professional societies and associations hold the potential to field-test promising technologies and methods, and AHRQ should provide funding for such efforts. Through these collaborative efforts, practice guidelines can be adopted, and technologies endorsed, always with the understanding that new and emerging technologies will change.

John Greene*

*Legislative Director for Federal and Regulatory Affairs
National Association of Health Underwriters (NAHU)*

** The opinions expressed in this letter may not reflect those of the NAHU.*

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