

**The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS)
and
Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS)
Health Care Coverage Position Statement**

Background Facts

Neurosurgeons are medical specialists who diagnose and treat disorders of the entire nervous system. Some of the conditions neurosurgeons treat, such as cerebrovascular disease and traumatic injuries, may have better outcomes if diagnosed and treated early. Access to affordable treatment is a key part of the equation.

- Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States, affecting more than 700,000 people every year, and represents \$51.2 billion in both direct and indirect costs.
- An estimated 11,000 new spinal cord injuries occur in the United States every year. The financial impact is estimated at a minimum of \$9.7 billion annually (including direct and indirect costs).
- Each year, nearly two million people in the United States sustain head injuries, with annual direct and indirect costs of more than \$48 billion. Deaths from head injuries account for 34 percent of all traumatic deaths.

Justification

The number of uninsured Americans continues to increase. According to the Census Bureau's latest estimate (August 2004), the number of uninsured Americans increased from 43.6 million (15.2 percent) in 2002 to 45 million (15.6 percent) in 2003. There are a number of contributing factors accounting for this increase. One contributing factor is the decrease in the number of people receiving coverage through employer-based programs.

The economic cost of the uninsured in the United States is estimated between \$65 billion to \$130 billion annually, and is attributed to the poor health and premature deaths of uninsured individuals.

Access to affordable health care for all Americans, prevention, and patient education are integral to resolving the public health crisis in the United States.

Position Statement

The AANS and CNS recognize that millions of Americans have no health insurance. This is a serious problem facing our Nation that requires prompt attention. The AANS and CNS therefore support health insurance coverage for every American.

Approved April 2005

PRINCIPLES FOR REFORM OF THE U.S. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

PREAMBLE: Health care coverage for all is needed to facilitate access to quality health care, which will in turn improve the individual and collective health of society.

1. Health care coverage for all is needed to ensure quality of care and to improve the health status of Americans.
2. The health care system in the U.S. must provide appropriate health care to all people within the U.S. borders, without unreasonable financial barriers to care.
3. Individuals and families must have catastrophic health coverage to provide protection from financial ruin.
4. Improvement of health care quality and safety must be the goal of all health interventions, so that we can assure optimal outcomes for the resources expended.
5. In reforming the health care system, we as a society must respect the ethical imperative of providing health care to individuals, responsible stewardship of community resources, and the importance of personal health responsibility.
6. Access to and financing for appropriate health services must be a shared public/private cooperative effort, and a system which will allow individuals/employers to purchase additional services or insurance.
7. Cost management by all stakeholders, consistent with achieving quality health care, is critical to attaining a workable, affordable and sustainable health care system.
8. Less complicated administrative systems are essential to reduce costs, create a more efficient health care system, and maximize funding for health care services.
9. Sufficient funds must be available for research (basic, clinical, translational and health services), medical education, and comprehensive health information technology infrastructure and implementation.
10. Sufficient funds must be available for public health and other essential medical services to include, but not be limited to, preventive services, trauma care and mental health services.
11. Comprehensive medical liability reform is essential to ensure access to quality health care.

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Physicians
American College of Surgeons
American Medical Association
American Osteopathic Association
Congress of Neurological Surgeons

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