

# HEALTH CARE CLIENT ALERT



## **Almost 1 Medical Malpractice Claim Filed for Every Physician, Reports AMA**

A study from the American Medical Association (AMA) reports that an average of 95 medical liability claims are filed for every 100 physicians, almost one per physician.

The AMA says its report has data not available anywhere else, including information on medical liability claims' impact by age, gender and practice arrangement for physicians.

Highlights in the report include:

1. Nearly 61 percent of physicians age 55 and over have been sued.
2. There is a wide variation in the impact of liability claims between specialties. The number of claims per 100 physicians was more than five times greater for general surgeons and obstetricians/gynecologists than it was for pediatricians and psychiatrists.
3. Before they reach the age of 40, more than 50 percent of obstetricians/gynecologists have already been sued.
4. Ninety percent of general surgeons age 55 and over have been sued.

"Even though the vast majority of claims are dropped or decided in favor of physicians, the understandable fear of meritless lawsuits can influence what specialty of medicine physicians practice, where they practice and when they retire," said AMA Immediate Past-President J. James Rohack, M.D. "This litigious climate hurts patients' access to physician care at a time when the nation is working to reduce unnecessary health care costs."

The AMA says that the number of medical liability claims is not an indication of the frequency of medical error, as the physician prevails 90 percent of the time in cases that go to trial. THOR]

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