MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution 4-15

INTRODUCED BY: Anne Arundel and Howard County Medical Society

SUBJECT: Unreasonable Practices of Online Rating Sites

Whereas, Physician Online Rating sites invite patients to rate physicians on the internet; and

Whereas, Online Rating sites rate physicians according to how clean their office is, how they explain patients’ illnesses, how professional their medical staff is and other things; and

Whereas, these Online Rating sites are not to be confused with professional rating organizations or actual measures of a physician’s competence based on clinical outcomes; and

Whereas, these sites are often cumbersome and complicated to use; and

Whereas, many of the patients who are motivated to use these sites are those who want to post negative comments; and

Whereas, one study showed that patients with hidden agendas such as drug seekers or psychiatrically ill patients are more likely to post negative comments on these sites; and

Whereas, one study identified a sub group of patients who regularly use these sites and discovered that they have a higher mortality rate than patients who do not use these sites; and

Whereas, various sources have suggested competitors from other offices or other non-patients may use these sites to post negative comments; and

Whereas, even some physicians who have had their medical licenses revoked or suspended may have favorable ratings on these sites; and

Whereas, these Online Ratings sites have been known to tell offices that they will accept payment from physicians to suppress negative reviews; therefore be it

Resolved, that MedChi educate physicians about online ratings companies and how to protect their patients from undue influence by these companies; and be it further

Resolved, that MedChi keep physicians informed about the medicolegal risk of posting replies on online rating sites; and be it further

Resolved, that MedChi explore the feasibility of streamlining the process for physicians’ offices so that a physician’s office can post reviews on behalf of patients who wish to post comments (with their written consent) on online rating sites.

As amended and approved by the House of Delegates at its meeting on April 25, 2015.