



The Maryland State Medical Society

2017 KEY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

PHYSICIAN SCOPE OF PRACTICE

THE PROBLEM: Non-physicians regularly turn to the General Assembly to expand their “scope of practice.” In the last few years, for example, podiatrists, “naturopaths,” “lay midwives” and pharmacists have all sought legislative approval to increase their scope or to recognize them as a licensed or certified provider. Of particular note this upcoming session will be efforts by the optometrists to expand their scope to include the prescribing of controlled substances and other oral medications, independent treatment of glaucoma, ordering of independent tests and testing in the office setting, removal of foreign bodies and use of all FDA approved therapeutic agents and devices. Often, non-physician groups are using the argument that their enhanced scope of practice is necessary to provide “access” to all individuals.

SOLUTION: Attempts by non-physician groups to secure physician privileges by way of legislation should be resisted. When there is a reasonable argument that increased “access” is necessary, the role of non-physicians should be enhanced only when they are supervised by or in collaboration with a physician who is properly trained in the particular medical area.

WHAT TO DO: Call/email/write to your legislators and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee and Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee to look unfavorably on “scope of practice” expansions by non-physicians and to question the proponents as to why they should be exempt from the normal educational requirements required of physicians. Contact MedChi for legislative contact information at 1-800-492-1056.