



For Immediate Release
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Vermont Medical Society Physician Members Adopt New Health Care Policies

Montpelier, Vt. (Nov. 18, 2019) – In early November, the Vermont Medical Society (VMS) physician members adopted ten policy resolutions to address priority issues for the State’s physicians. VMS is the largest physician and physician assistant organization in the State and meets annually to adopt policies relevant to all domains of health care in Vermont. The 2019 policies reflect the high priority Vermont’s physicians place on improving public health and health care access for patients. The ten policies: support protection for women’s reproductive rights; guide how physicians can ethically opt not to provide certain medical services; support stronger regulation of cannabidiol (CBD); support minors consenting to STI prevention services; encourage the dissemination of evidence-based information regarding stem cell clinics; advocate to alleviate the impacts of high deductible health plans on both patients and physicians; support the humane treatment of migrant families at all U.S. borders; and urge the advancement of policies to significantly reduce Vermont’s carbon pollution.

VMS members approved the resolutions during the organization’s 206th annual meeting Nov. 2nd, in Stowe, Vt. The resolutions inform the organization’s 2020 public policy efforts on behalf of its 2,400 physician and physician assistant members. [Click here](#) for the full text of the resolutions. In summary, these are the adopted resolutions:

[Codifying Protection for Women’s Reproductive Rights](#)

In 2018, the VMS Council (governing board) voted unanimously to adopt policy supporting codifying protection for women’s reproductive rights, including the

right to contraception and access to safe, legal abortion, through Vermont law and/or a Vermont Constitutional Amendment. The VMS has policy dating back to 1971 stating that the “matter of abortion should be solely a concern of the patient and her physician like any other operation or treatment.” The VMS membership voted earlier this month to reaffirm the 2018 Council policy.

Clinician Conscience Objection and Ethical Care of Patients

VMS members adopted a policy that recognizes that certain types of medical care and treatment can come in conflict with physician, physician assistant and medical student’s cultural values, ethics and religious beliefs. In the policy, the VMS commits to protecting its members freedom to decide whether to participate in providing certain care or treatment, as long as that decision is carried out consistent with standards of professional ethics, such as informing the patient about all relevant options for treatment, including options to which the physician morally objects, and providing patients with information regarding how to access such services.

Regulation of Cannabidiol (CBD)

CBD is currently widely available in Vermont. Sold in everything from an additive to your latte or in the gummy bears on the counter at the general store, these products are generally unregulated. The VMS adopted a resolution supporting the regulation of the sale and manufacture of cannabidiol (CBD) products and encouraging the distribution of evidence-based information to clinicians and the public regarding the potential health risks of CBD. VMS supports the enforcement of current federal law in which CBD is only available as an FDA-approved drug and will work to increase enforcement against the false advertising of non-FDA approved CBD for therapeutic or medical purposes. VMS supports the regulation of the manufacture of CBD to ensure it is free of contaminants; has reliable drug concentration of CBD; contains no more than trace amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC); is not added to food, especially products attractive to children; and that it not be fed to livestock.

Minor Consent for STI Prevention Services

Current Vermont law allows minors to consent to treatment services for sexual transmitted infections (STI) but does not allow minors to consent to STI preventive services. The VMS will work with the Vermont General Assembly and the Vermont Department of Health to allow minors age 12 years old and older to consent to confidential medical services for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including Hepatitis B vaccination, Human Papillomavirus vaccination, and HIV pre- and post-exposure medication.

Stem Cell Clinics

In recent years, there has been a burgeoning of “stem cell clinics” in the United States and internationally, which offer various “stem cell treatments” that are not scientifically proven and not regulated by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The VMS supports the dissemination of evidence-based information regarding stem cell clinics and therapies to our members and patients. VMS will also coordinate with professional licensing boards and other regulatory bodies to ensure that patients seeking stem cell treatments receive safe and evidence-based services.

High Deductible Health Plans

Forty percent of Vermonters with private health insurance plan are deemed “undersinsured” due to high deductibles and other out-of-pocket costs. High deductible health plans have shifted the burden of bill collection from insurers to physician practices who cite slow payment by those with high deductibles as their top collection challenge. The VMS resolves to research and advocate for solutions to difficulties patients and physician practices face regarding high deductible health plans and high out-of-pocket costs, such as increasing the number of services exempt from cost-sharing and continuing to advocate for methods to slow the overall growth in health care costs overall. VMS will also advocate for processes that take physicians out of the middle of health care billing and collection practices.

Forensic Mental Health Infrastructure in Vermont

Vermont healthcare and governmental leadership are carefully considering how best to address issues surrounding the post-verdict treatment of insanity acquittees or those who have been found not guilty by reason of insanity, including: where to place them; when, by what criteria, and on what conditions to discharge them; and whether and how to monitor their behavior after discharge. The VMS adopted resolution recommends that the Vermont General Assembly allocate resources to conduct a formal study to address: (1) treatment and monitoring in community and hospital settings for persons found not competent to stand trial in Vermont and (2) models for competency to stand trial restoration in community, hospital, and correctional settings.

Support for the Humane Treatment of Migrant Families at all U.S. Borders

Through this resolution, VMS pledges to support the humane treatment of migrant families and their children, which includes opposing their detention and the separation of children from their parents and caregivers. VMS also supports actions to provide optimal access to food, clean water, hygiene, vaccines and necessary and timely medical and mental health care to families and children who are held in immigration detention centers. The VMS will also work with other medical organizations to advocate for the ability for physicians and other health care providers to provide migrant families and their children, whether detained or not, the highest standard of medical and mental health care in keeping with their ethics and training.

Reducing Carbon Pollution Emissions in Vermont

The VMS strongly urges Vermont policy makers to act immediately to protect the health of Vermonters by advancing policies which will significantly reduce Vermont's carbon pollution, while protecting the health and financial well-being of vulnerable Vermonters. These policies will include reducing the use of fossil fuels by Vermonters in multiple sectors of the economy, while creating economic opportunity as the new energy economy accelerates, to ensure Vermont meets greenhouse gas emissions in statute.

[Click here for the full language of the 2019 Adopted Resolutions](#)

About the Vermont Medical Society: The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to protecting the health of all Vermonters and improving the environment in which Vermont physicians and physician assistants practice medicine. The Society serves its 2,400 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit www.VTMD.org.