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State's physicians to discuss the importance of a 'medical home'

INDIANAPOLIS (Sept. 26, 2007) – Familiar places give comfort. When you're sick, it's not only comforting to go where people know you; it's critical that they know your medical history.

Physician organizations are increasingly calling for people to establish one location for medical treatment, allowing health care providers to deliver both continuity and coordination of care. That's particularly critical for chronically ill patients and children.

"Medical care should be delivered or directed by well-trained physicians who provide primary care and help to manage and facilitate essentially all aspects of care," said Mary Ian McAteer, M.D., an Indianapolis pediatrician and author of a resolution, or call to action, presented to the Indiana State Medical Association (ISMA).

Indiana physicians who comprise the ISMA's policy-making body, the House of Delegates, will debate Dr. McAteer's resolution as well as 37 others during their annual meeting in Indianapolis Sept. 28-30. Those resolutions adopted by the delegates will create an action plan for the organization for the coming year.

Specifically, Dr. McAteer wants the ISMA to educate its nearly 8,400 physician members about the medical home concept, already adopted by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Practice and the American College of Physicians.

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The pediatrician, who is with Meridian Pediatrics on Indianapolis' north side, described the ideal medical home as “accessible, continuous, comprehensive, family-centered, coordinated, compassionate and culturally effective.”

While clinics popping up in drug stores and big box retailers may be accessible, Dr. McAteer worries about what they do not provide. They do not allow the creation of partnerships between patients and caregivers, partnerships marked by mutual responsibility and trust.

“Within the dialogue of making our health care delivery system better, we need to prioritize the relationship of trust and responsibility that exists between physicians and patients,” Dr. McAteer said. “Maintaining that relationship is the most important goal and certainly the direction we want to take with any health care change.”

The ISMA has existed for 158 years, carrying out its mission to promote sound health care policy in the public, private and governmental sectors and to support continuing medical education for the state's doctors.

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Editor's note: For more on the ISMA convention, go to www.ismanet.org/news/convention/conv_media_center.htm.