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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Secrecy Of Doctor's Profiles On The Rise

If Governor Andrew Cuomo shuts down the "Doctor Profile" resource website of the NYS Department of Health, it will deprive consumers of vital facts regarding doctors' credentials, license status and malpractice settlements and judgments. This ill-conceived action will radically eliminate what patient safety advocates have fought hard for and achieved more than 10 years ago.

The "Doctor Profile" is the only state mandated public resource allowing the public to access their physicians' backgrounds. It requires physicians to disclose three or more malpractice settlements or judgments and whether the state has taken any disciplinary action against the doctor's license.

Preventable medical errors are the third leading cause of death in

America, following cancer and heart disease. The cost to society exceeds \$50 billion annually.

Not only should the website remain intact, but it should be expanded to include disclosure of all malpractice settlements and judgments against doctors, hospitals and private health care facilities. It should also disclose all medical errors and adverse events reported by hospitals and health care facilities.

To hold this information in secrecy as presently exists only protects the wrongdoer from accountability and does not enforce patient safety measures.

In Cuomo's proposal, he mentions that consumers can go to private websites that permit access to physician qualifications and reviews, often for a fee. These sites cannot compel physicians to report malpractice settlements or judgments.

Full disclosure—not

secrecy—allows consumers to choose the best doctors and hospitals and will help eliminate preventable medical injuries and death.

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