

MCMS Position ED Overcrowding Position Statement

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Throughout the US Emergency Departments, the safety net of the US healthcare system, are experiencing overcrowding. The number of patients seeking care from emergency rooms is on the rise (a number that now exceeds 100 million patients in the US alone), while the number of emergency rooms declined by 12% during the 1990's. 241,849 patients sought care in local emergency departments during 2001.

A recent MCMS survey indicated that 95% of physicians who responded felt that ED overcrowding is a problem at the hospital where they admit patients. Many factors are at work: hospital closures; inadequate staffing; shortage of acute care inpatient beds; and a lack of universal access to primary care.

The MCMS supports the position that physicians and health care facilities have an ethical obligation and moral responsibility to provide needed emergency services to all patients. The MCMS is committed to ensuring that all patients receive timely and appropriate access to health care, including emergency service. Efforts must be directed on local, state, and federal levels to guarantee prompt and appropriate access to emergency care for all patients. The MCMS supports the position of the American College of Emergency Physicians as stated by its President, Michael T. Rapp MD. "Solutions will require a willingness to devote the necessary resources to ensure the availability of emergency care. They will require cooperation from managed care plans, as well as addressing uncompensated care issues, but they are essential to making sure the general public can continue to rely on emergency departments for quality and timely emergency care."