



A message from . . .

The President

THIS ONE'S FOR YOU . . .

TIMES are tough in West Virginia. The economic crunch has hit. Our unemployment rate is one of the highest, if not the highest, in the nation, and for a great many of these people, their health benefits are running out. The Department of Welfare is attempting to avoid cuts in medical services, but because of other budget cuts is forced to cut almost all social services contracts. The state Public Employees' Insurance Board (responsible for the health benefits payments of some 94,000 public employees) is projecting a deficit of at least \$9 million for fiscal year 1983. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has issued an appeal for contributions to a food fund to provide food for needy families. The doleful litany of economic hardships continues.

In my travels throughout the state on your behalf, one of the bright spots in this bleak economic landscape I have found is the encouraging number of our physicians who are contributing their time and talents for little or no remuneration. Many are not sending in Medicaid claims. Others are writing off bills for families in severe economic circumstances, or arranging long-term deferred payments. The doctors volunteering for the Handicapped Children's Services program devote their time far in excess of what they would usually expect to receive. These doctors generally do not get any kind of credit or publicity for their actions. This is a form of "good news," and good news does not sell newspapers or get media attention to the extent that bad news does.

Obviously, not all our members can participate in these actions. In areas where practices are

comprised of 40-50 per cent of publically-assisted patients, the income from the state may be the difference between keeping the office or clinic open or shutting it down. Certain areas of our state, unfortunately, have more than their share of the medically-indigent population, and doctors in these areas must utilize all revenue sources. I understand this and commend them for their provision of quality medical care with less than optimum resources.

The generosity of our physicians who are sharing the burden of the economic times with their patients is praiseworthy and appreciated. I would urge you to consider, where appropriate, extending and enlarging this generosity, to insure that those who need quality medical care are not hampered in their efforts to achieve it by the fear of inability to pay. I am not aware of any instance where someone who truly needed care was turned away purely because of an inability to pay for it.

So, I personally ask all of you who have not considered this before to give it your immediate attention. And, for the many of you who have been doing this all along; who have been providing quality medical care at a considerable sacrifice of your time and talents; and who have been largely unsung and unpublicized for all this time, my hat is off to you. As the song says, friends, "This One's For You!"

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harry Shannon M.D.".

Harry Shannon, M. D., *President*
West Virginia State Medical Association