

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

The medical crises in Humboldt County continues to worsen with a shortage of medical professionals and the possible closing of three of the rehabilitation and wellness centers which would reduce the number of skilled nursing home beds by over half. The reasons for this reduction in medical services are many. I will list a few, as I see them, and the list will not be in any prioritized order. They are: Humboldt has more than its share of citizens, who have very low income, covered under State MEDICAL Insurance. For those under MEDICAL, the medical provider reimbursements are so little; the provider could not live on those payments alone. Our seniors are covered by Medicare which pays a bit more at eighty percent with the insured either coming up with the remaining twenty percent out of pocket or from supplemental health insurance if they have a plan. There has been a lot of discontent among the providers regarding the very low amount of MEDICAL and Medicare reimbursements. Why should doctors work for such a meager wage? No one offered them a discount in the tuition fees when they were in training. Then you have those doctors who would accept a position locally but the spouse doesn't want to live in a depressed area or doesn't like the rainy, cloudy weather. So, you end up with traveling medical professionals. They do not work for free and expenses sky rocket. We have some very wonderful, dedicated medical professionals among us but there are not enough to maintain the level of care needed in Humboldt County. When that medical care is not available, the only thing left is to transport the patient to another hospital or skilled nursing facility where they can get the attention needed. About two years ago an old school mate of mine needed rehabilitation and there were no beds available in Eureka. She accepted a bed in Willits for a short time until a vacant bed was located in a facility closer to one of her children. So many medical students are from the metropolitan areas, they are trained in a metro area and they would just as soon practice in a metro area where they have access to a more active life style and a higher standard of living. Another thing I failed to mention was the recruiting headache for the local physicians. They let it be known that there is an opening, and someone from another part of the United States replies that they might be interested. So what happens next? The local physician pays all the recruit's expenses to Eureka. After all is said and done, the recruit does not have to accept the position. How many times can that local doctor pay for recruitment trips of this magnitude? Wouldn't it be nice if our state politicians would concentrate on health care solutions rather than legalization of marijuana?

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