

To the Editor:

Re: "The Best Course of Treatment," July 21, 2003 (Editorials/Op-Ed)

Philip Howard's refreshingly patient-centered perspective is aptly timed, following the latest defeat in Congress of a \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages in medical malpractice cases. This proposal has never won public support, despite the fact that both plaintiffs and defendants experience the medical liability system as dysfunctional. The cap is a poison pill that should be abandoned by those interested in garnering the support of consumers and policymakers.

Medical reform advocates, you have a fresh opportunity to reposition. If consulted, your patients will tell you that they want the truth when medical injury occurs, an apology, something done to prevent the same thing from happening again, and fair compensation - not the lottery jackpot. They will also confirm that they hate having to sue you to obtain these things. Build your next reform proposals authentically on these principles and you will attract real support from a public eager for change.

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