



## **Office Visit: Legislation must put patients first**

*The Journal Record*

By David Holden, MD

April 7, 2010

While many Oklahomans, both in the medical community and public at large, have recently voiced their opinions on national health care legislation, a major issue here at home that could impact the safety of all Oklahoma patients has almost gone unnoticed.

It was recently brought to my attention by the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association and the Oklahoma State Medical Association that the Oklahoma Pharmacy Board recently passed changes to a rule that would drastically change the physician-patient relationship. Oklahoma pharmacists are advocating for an increased scope of practice under the rule of Collaborative Medication Therapy Management – Chapter 10, Subchapter 9 (535)-Pharmaceutical care.

Under the proposed rules, a pharmacist, in collaboration with a physician, could manage a patient's medications, including changing medications, interpreting lab work, performing physical exams and troubleshooting toxicity side effects. This is a problem because under the proposed rule, the collaborating physician does not have to be the attending physician of the patient in question. A physician who has never seen a particular patient and who has no knowledge of their medical history can collaborate with a patient's pharmacist to make these medical decisions, many of which could be life-threatening.

There are current rules that allow some type of collaborative practice agreement in which physicians delegate patient management responsibilities to pharmacists, but the proposed rule would increase pharmacists' scope of practice to a point that would put patients' safety at risk.

Decisions about the most appropriate drug for a patient's condition are often subtle and typically based on a patient's medical history, including other conditions and prior treatments. It's imperative that physicians control prescriptive rights and have final approval over all patient care decisions.

Physicians and pharmacists both play a key role in the health care process and it's to the patient's advantage when their physician and pharmacist collaborate together in their best interest. But this proposed rule by the Oklahoma Pharmacy Board unwisely takes the patient's physician out of the decision-making process.

While it's still unclear how the Oklahoma Pharmacy Board will proceed with this rule change, it's important that Oklahomans understand this type of rule is out there and without intervention by the governor and our state legislators, it could become law – a law that would drastically reduce the quality of patient care for all Oklahomans.

*Dr. David Holden is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon and currently serves on the board of directors with McBride Clinic Inc. in Oklahoma City.*