



The Real Reason for “Excessive” Medical Tests

Written On September 29, 2009 By [Bob Kraft](#)

Today's [Dallas Morning News](#) has an editorial regarding medical testing that is relevant to the current health care debate. In my experience, “excessive” medical testing has more to do with medical professionals wanting to profit from the tests than with the defensive medicine so often mentioned by proponents of tort reform. That doesn't mean the medical tests aren't helpful in diagnosing the patient's problem. I'm just saying that defensive medicine doesn't seem to be the driving force behind these additional tests. And that's one more reason why tort reform, besides being unfair to patients, is simply not the solution to the medical expense crisis. Here are excerpts from the editorial:

While looking at home health care, Texas lawmakers also should revisit the ease with which doctors refer patients to clinics they have an ownership interest in. We don't doubt that many physicians are above board in recommending tests. Still, a conflict of interest is bred into the referral, and patients should be aware.

Texas has a particular abundance of medical imaging operations that are ripe for question. *The Dallas Morning News'* Ryan McNeill reported last week that only California built more medical imaging centers than Texas from 2000 to 2007. And the centers are a new revenue stream for some doctors. The General Accounting Office reports that Medicare payments to cardiologists increased 13 percent from 2000 to 2006.

Opponents killed recent proposals in Austin to require licensing or accreditation of the machines. This year, the bill included a provision to study the volume of self-referrals in Texas by physicians.

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The Legislature's health committees should use this interim period to craft a similar proposal for the 2011 session. And they should make it clear that doctors must let patients know when they own all or some of the clinic to which the patient's been referred.