Physicians from across the political spectrum, from all over the country and representing nearly every specialty, came to Washington, DC earlier this week to advocate for and protect patients by shining a spotlight on the many hidden ways healthcare dollars are being wasted and abused.

This coalition of grassroots physician organizations aims to make healthcare more affordable by facilitating physicians ability to be free to care (see here [1]). This reality is currently threatened and under significant attack by the involvement of innumerable third party players whose influence has marginalized the primary stakeholders of doctor and patient - all the while depleting resources away from the landscape without any consideration for the best interest of the patient, and routinely to their detriment.
As rising costs and narrowing access with respect to healthcare dominates today’s discourse, a blurred picture has been promulgated as to the why. This symposium, held at the Library of Congress, is calling for transparency not simply of drug price listings, but everything, touching heavily on the topic of the opacity of the middlemen (ie pharmacy benefit managers, group purchasing organizations), as one example (1). Misguided avenues for addressing physician shortages that ostensibly reduce care quality is another important subject, along with non-medical switching, kickbacks and health savings account reforms. The litany is long and vital to a thorough understanding of where actionable and effective measures can be implemented that yield the greatest dividends (watch video here [2] or here [3]).

Soundbites and politics will not cure what ails this ever fragmenting “system.”

As Dr. Marion Mass (pictured after quote wearing white coat), one of the lead organizers and co-founder of Practicing Physicians of America [3], best articulates

“Physicians take an oath. Our oath is to teach our craft to carry it forward and to do no harm to our patients. To protect them. Our advocacy is something we must do to keep our oath given the current healthcare landscape is in need of healing. Us coming together as leaders who have no conflicts of interest, only a vested interest in keeping this oath, and coming together with patient advocacy organizations is the only way to fix healthcare.

Present at the event were African-American pastors representing congregations and organizations representing Hispanic Americans. Organizations as well representing the patients of America in total. Doctors from all across America from both sides of the aisle came together...with their hands outstretched to help heal the broken healthcare landscape. Who better to do than us? If not us, then who will do it? It certainly will not be the best and special interests that are sucking billions, hundreds of billions in fact out of the healthcare system each year... The first thing that must happen is transparency. And by that I mean the public must understand the flow of money in healthcare.”
At the bipartisan breakfast I was honored to attend for healthcare leaders and lawmakers, obstetrician and U.S. Representative (Dr.) Roger Marshall spoke of his conversation last week
with President Trump underscoring an emphasis on transparency, innovation and understanding the current consumerism in healthcare delivery. Former U.S. Navy SEAL officer and current U.S. Representative Dan Crenshaw was also available to discuss the many issues at hand (photo atop this article).
While there and standing with Dr. Nicole Johnson, co-founder of the organization Physicians for Patients
[4], we learned an article on her talk on tackling physician shortages was featured in *MedPage Today* (see link here [5], pictured together below). Please find more photos from the breakfast as well, including a group picture and one with emergency room physician Dr. Katherine Newland Barton.
Note(s):

1. To get a more comprehensive picture on this topic, review these articles:

   - As President Trump Calls For Low Drug Prices, Media Hypes Pharma’s Recent Increases [6]
   - Hospital Systems Getting Into The Big Pharma Game [7]
   - Is It Checkmate For Pharma’s Epic Gaming Of Patents? [8]
   - Pharma And Hospital Systems Now Playing The Drug-Pricing Blame Game [9]
   - Are Cancer Drugs Cheaper To Make Than Previously Thought? New Study Claims So. [10]
   - To understand the complicated nature of the many profit centers that influence drug pricing, review my ACSH colleague Dr. Chuck Dinerstein’s two-part series on The Spread- Exploring The Reason for The High Cost of Pharmaceuticals here [11] and here [12].