

# Better Diagnosis Needed

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Dr. Jack Jawitz's article "Florida's Coming Medical Disaster" (Commentary, Aug. 11) points out a serious issue that we should all be aware of. But by diverting our attention from the real cause of the problem, Jawitz only hampers productive debate and our ability to create viable solutions.

The cause of the problem isn't in the stars, the courts or the trial lawyers. Here, the cause lies within the medical community itself. It came about because the American Medical Association (AMA) back in the 1970s said that an "oversupply of doctors exists or is immediately expected."

Productive debate requires recognition that this is a national problem and not a local one. In fact, Florida appears to be doing relatively well. The Department of Health and the Agency for Healthcare Administration told our Legislature that there are more licensed doctors in Florida now than five years ago. Florida Trend in 2004 reported that the number of Florida doctors outpaced the state's population. Since the 1990s, the overall population increased 23 percent while the number of doctors jumped by 42 percent. The evidence is that doctors in this country continue to view Florida as a very favorable place to establish their medical practices.

This country has serious problems. The looming doctor shortage is only one of them. For the country's sake, we as doctors and lawyers must stop the finger pointing and the rehash of old wounds and tired arguments. The health of Florida and the nation depend on finding viable solutions, and that must start with making an accurate diagnosis of the problems.

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