

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Adverse Events and Patient Safety
Statement by WSMA President Brian Wicks, MD**

The number one priority of the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) is to make Washington a better place to practice medicine and to receive care. We are pleased to be part of this effort. Improving the quality of care in our state is of utmost important to the WSMA and our physician members.

Washington physicians and the facilities where we practice are committed to patient safety and to providing high quality care to every patient in our state.

Although adverse events are very rare, they do occur and we are committed to work to identify the cause of an adverse event, work to prevent it from happening again, and immediately work to rectify any harm caused to the patient.

This voluntary agreement affirms what patients expect and what we believe to be the current standard of practice for most physicians, hospitals and surgery centers in our state. Certainly no patient should be expected to pay for an adverse event, such as a wrong site surgery or removable of a foreign object post surgery.

Thankfully in our state such adverse events are very rare.

Hospital association data shows that, out of a total of about 630,000 admissions in 2007, there were a total of 193 adverse events reported to the state. The most common reportable event was Stage 3/4 pressure ulcers (117), followed by retention of foreign object post surgery/procedure (35) and surgery – wrong body part (14).

One adverse event, however, is one too many, and when such anomalies occur we must do a root cause analysis to prevent such things from happening in the future.

And we agree that no patient should be required to pay for care directly related to the event by the physician or facility.

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Editor's note: Dr. Brian Wicks is the president of the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA). The WSMA represents over 9,000 physicians and surgeons throughout Washington state. Dr. Wicks is an orthopedic surgeon hand specialists at The Doctors Clinic in Silverdale, WA.