

# PREFACE

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Books such as this one are deceptively difficult to create. The general subject is neither happy, nor easy, nor most anyone's idea of fun. Malpractice litigation, however, has become a central fact of existence in the practice of medicine today. This tsunami of lawsuits has led to a high volume of irreconcilable rhetoric and ultimately threatens the stability of the entire health care system. Our goal has been to provide a source of reliable information on a subject of importance to all who provide medical care in the United States.

The book is divided into four sections. Part I gives an overview of insurance in general and discusses the organization of professional liability insurance companies in particular. Part II focuses on the litigation process itself with views from the defense and plaintiff bar, and the physician as both expert and defendant. Part III looks at malpractice litigation from the viewpoint of the practicing physician. Some of the chapters are broadly relevant to all doctors—the rise of e-medicine, and the importance of effective communication, for example. The other chapters are constructed around individual medical specialties, but discuss issues that are of potential interest to all.

Part IV looks ahead. “The Case for Legal Reform” presents changes in medical-legal jurisprudence that can be of immediate benefit. The final two chapters take a broader perspective on aspects of our entire health care system and its interface with law and public policy.

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I am indebted to each of the contributors for their effort, wisdom, and experience.

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