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## **Obama to AMA: You're the problem**

Written by Jim Brown

A leading health economist says President Obama delivered a subtle and unpleasant message to the American Medical Association yesterday, implying that doctors are the main problem behind rising healthcare costs.

Barack Obama cited in his AMA speech what he argues are radical differences in the practice of medicine across the country -- some doctors are practicing medicine conservatively, while others are ordering unnecessary tests and prescribing "treatments that, in some cases, can actually do people harm by raising the risk of infection or medical error."

Dr. John Goodman, president of the National Center for Policy Analysis, believes President Obama wants the federal government to force doctors to change the way they practice medicine.

"They are talking about a system parallel to the employer-based health insurance

system," he explains. "So if you don't get insurance from an employer, you go into this artificial market that would be regulated and controlled by the government.

"You would have choices in this market," he continues, "and the left-wing of the Democratic Party wants one of the choices to be a government-run health insurance plan -- by which they generally mean Medicare for young people."

Goodman says Obama's plan would push doctor and hospital fees and premiums so low that an estimated 120 million Americans would drop their private health insurance plan for the government program.

As to the president's implication that physicians themselves are part of the problem, Goodman argues that both doctors and patients are victims of the system.

"Doctors are not the problem," he states. "It's a lack of a competitive marketplace

that's the problem. Doctors are just as much a victim as patients. We are all trapped in a dysfunctional healthcare system [that is] shaped and molded by bad government policy." Goodman's blog on health policy encourages individuals to sign an online "Free Our Health Care

NOW!" petition.

Many in the AMA audience booed President Obama when he said is against limiting malpractice awards, which is the group's highest legislative priority.