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PIAA Comments on New Institute of Medicine Report, ‘Improving Diagnosis in Health Care’

Rockville, MD (September 22, 2015) – PIAA, the nation’s leading association representing the medical professional liability (MPL) insurance community, today commented on a new study issued by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), "Improving Diagnosis in Health Care."

The IOM report recognizes that diagnostic errors are frequently not the result of negligence, but of failings in the health system as a whole. It highlights the need to improve communications between healthcare professionals, and between those professionals and their patients, acknowledges that inappropriately applied health IT can contribute to errors, and criticizes our legal system for focusing on punishment rather than addressing the causes of diagnostic errors. Most notably, the report calls for state and federal action to address our broken medical liability system.

"PIAA recognizes this issue of importance to all those involved with providing healthcare and those they serve," said Gloria H. Everett, PIAA Chair and President and CEO, The Mutual RRG. "Safe medical care is truly the cornerstone of the PIAA philosophy and mission. We are committed, collectively, to the quality delivery of healthcare and practice of medicine."

"We recognize the significant steps that have already been taken by doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals and institutions and medical liability insurers—such as those that comprise PIAA—to advance patient safety," Everett continued. "Together, using rigorous quality improvement tools such as root cause analysis, we have created a safer environment for all patients. The groundbreaking advances in risk reduction have had a tremendous impact in improving patient outcomes."

The report of the IOM Committee on “Diagnostic Error in Health Care” is a continuation of the IOM Health Care Quality Initiative, which includes the IOM reports "To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System" and "Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century."

"Diagnosis is an area that's been a major focus of our attention," stated P. Divya Parikh, Vice President of Research and Risk Management, PIAA. "Based upon 30 years of analyses of more than 300,000 medical liability claims in the PIAA Data Sharing Project, diagnosis related issues rank high when examining the factors that contribute to the number of claims reported and severity of claims."

"It is critical to look at this issue in a broad context rather than considering it in a vacuum," she continued. "Addressing diagnostic errors should be done with the goal of optimizing healthcare, which requires both improving patient outcomes and reforming our broken medical litigation system."

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PIAA is the nation’s leading association representing medical professional liability insurance companies, risk retention groups, captives, trusts, and other entities with a commitment to the quality delivery of healthcare. PIAA members insure more than 2 million healthcare professionals around the world—doctors, dentists, nurses and nurse practitioners, and other healthcare providers—including more than two-thirds of America’s private practicing physicians. PIAA members also insure more than 2,000 hospitals and 8,000 medical facilities.