

McAllen Monitor

McAllen, TX

Circ 42624

APR 30 2003

Report: Lawsuit abuse affecting physicians

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The Monitor

A report published Tuesday by the Texas Public Policy Foundation identifies lawsuit abuse as having a severe negative impact on the ability of doctors to practice medicine and on the care patients are receiving.

The report found that in the last 10 years the size of awards from medical liability suits has

increased 500 percent in Texas, while the number of medical liability cases filed in Texas is doubling every five years.

Even medical liability lawsuits eventually dismissed with no payment to the plaintiff cost \$23,000 to defend, the report states.

"The greatest increase in awards is coming in the form of non-economic damages, which are highly subjective," said Colleen Whalen, adjunct pro-

fessor of medical legal issues at State University of New York.

"According to data provided by the Texas Department of Insurance, a \$250,000 cap on these awards could reduce Texas doctor's insurance premiums by 17 to 19 percent."