



Medical Malpractice Not to Blame for Rising Health Care Costs

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A panel of experts, speaking at Georgetown University, has declared that tort “reform” of medical malpractice lawsuits is not the solution to the current health care crisis. As many previous studies have detailed, this panel stated that medical malpractice accounts for only 2 to 3 percent of health care costs. So eliminating medical malpractice lawsuits entirely would have only a minimal effect on the costs of care. Here are excerpts from a [McClatchy](#) article about the panel discussion:

Curbing medical malpractice litigation isn't the “silver bullet” that's needed to slay the werewolf of rising health care costs, a panel of academics said Tuesday.

“Health policy myths become convenient truths,” said Gregg Bloche, a graduate of the medical and law schools at Yale and a former visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution. Bloche has written extensively on the implications of policy for doctors and patients.

Bloche, one of several speakers at a panel discussion organized by the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University, said that costs associated with medical malpractice accounted for “a small and steady fraction” of health care costs — 2 to 3 percent at most — and couldn't be blamed for the continuing increase in those costs.

For example, while Bloche put costs due to medical malpractice at roughly \$55 billion for 2007, total health care spending estimates for that year topped \$2.2 trillion.

Bloche was joined by other experts in the legal, medical and economics fields.

“The bottom line is that (malpractice) tort reforms don’t work as well as proponents say they do,” said Kathryn Zeiler, a professor of law and economics at Georgetown and a widely published author on the subject of malpractice revisions.