

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Malpractice Reform Bills Die On The Operating Table

Senate Democrats put an end to physicians' hopes of malpractice reform when two competing Republican bills failed to muster the 60 votes to end debate.

One bill would have put limits on all types of medical malpractice awards, and the other would only have limited awards in suits against OB-Gyns, according to CBS Marketwatch. Republicans accused Democrats of endangering patients, especially pregnant women, by failing to stop the rise in malpractice premiums. Democrats countered that insurance companies are reaping unreasonable profits.

The **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** (RWJF) put out a new study on the costs of malpractice insurance to coincide with these bills. Many states are in their fifth straight year of "malpractice crisis," the study found.

A crisis happens when insurance premiums skyrocket, the number of insurers shrinks and the financial health of insurers worsens. Premium hikes affect obstetricians and orthopedists most of all, the study found.

Putting a cap on non-economic damages might only have a "modest effect" on the growth of premiums, the RWJF study warned.