



## Step-by-Step Guide to: Writing an Op-Ed

### Drafting and Format

1. Pick a topic – something timely, compelling or even just reaction to a story you saw in the paper
2. Outline your thoughts – what is the issue at hand? What is your position? Why is it important?
3. Format of the actual piece – try to make your piece flow and follow this simple setup:

Intro Paragraph

Point 1

Point 2

Point 3

What it all means (1 to 2 sentences with a pithy closing)

4. Try to keep the original draft as close as possible to 800 words, or the length preferred by the publication you are submitting it to.

### Editing your draft

The simplest way to make edits to your piece is to submit them to either Megan or Mandy, who can help you polish your draft. We respond typically in 24 hours or less to the emails requesting edits and advice, so drop us a line at:

[Megan.Smith@drsforamerica.org](mailto:Megan.Smith@drsforamerica.org)

[Mandy.Krauthamer@drsforamerica.org](mailto:Mandy.Krauthamer@drsforamerica.org)

### How to submit

Typically – your newspaper will let you submit an electronic version of your piece, either by email or online. Go to the paper's web site, click on the "Opinions" section and follow the instructions there. Also, if you prefer, Megan or Mandy can help you track down that link.

The simplest way to find out how your newspaper takes submissions is to look at the directions in the print version of the Opinions page – or you can always call the opinions editor and ask.

### Follow up

The last step of any solid earned media effort is follow up. Opinion pieces are no different.

Call the paper and ask if:

1. your opinion piece was received
2. if they think it may run in the near future
3. are there any other guidelines for opinion pieces you may have missed in doing your research on the editor's preferred stylistic touches for submitted content



(Two Op-Ed's written by Doctors for America members)

## **Make Health System Work for Us**

By Dr. Elaine Bradshaw. September 23, 2009.

<http://www.abqjournal.com/north/opinion/23235145062northopinion09-23-09.htm>

Please, fellow New Mexicans — let's discuss health care reform in real terms.

Here's where I come from: I am a pediatrician, mother, wife and not a member of a political party — too much money and lobbyist influence for me. I know — and honestly, don't you know that our health care system can serve us better than it now does? This is not the time for divisive politics.

Many of us like our health care providers and our access to the U.S.'s terrific subspecialty care. But meanwhile, are we using our national resources as wisely as possible for our health? Why does our health care cost us so much, and leave so many of us out? Why do we pay twice what some countries pay, without better results?

For those who prefer words to numbers, here's a friend's story:

“My husband was diagnosed with an acute idiopathic illness in his late 20s that put him in the hospital every 4-6 months for 10 days at a time over five years. It then turned into chronic illness, and he has been dealing with many complex medical conditions for over 17 years.

“During the 5 years of hospital visits, he worked for a small business which put him on the state's catastrophic health program. While this was a good plan, we still had a lot of out-of-pocket expenses that almost put us into bankruptcy. He later chose to be a teacher not only for passion, but also for the good health care benefits, definitely not for the salary.”

Tea party folks — I don't enjoy paying taxes, and I really dislike budget deficits, which will grow enormously and drive up our taxes if we leave our health care system “as is.” Just remember that the real question is not whether we will pay taxes, but the amount and how well we use them. This is, after all, taxation with representation, unlike the British taxation that led to the historic Boston Tea Party.

Also, when thinking about reform, please consider the disadvantage our innovative citizens and companies face compared to those in countries with better-organized health care. Can we stop draining their resources with inefficiency? Can we improve the system so I can focus more on your child's health and less on bureaucracy?

Faults and all, in my family's budget, I'll still spend money on health before many other things. I'm thankful for the time I had with my mother in hospice, without worry about bills — Medicare. My entire family benefited from breast-feeding help for my daughter — private insurance. My aging father is independent despite breaking his ankle, thanks to physical therapy — Medicare and private insurance.

Please think, listen to your hearts, forget partisanship, call your representatives with your ideas, and keep in mind the health of your family and community. We have a historic chance to make our health care system work better for us!



## **I am no prop; doctors are on the frontlines in the healthcare debate**

By Stephen Patrick. October 11, 2009

<http://www.annarbor.com/news/opinion/i-am-no-prop-i-am-on-the-frontline-in-the-healthcare-debate/index.php>

This past Monday, I had the pleasure of being invited to the White House to talk about health reform. While shaking hands with the president in the Rose Garden is an honor, I did not come for him - I came for my patients. Too often I have seen care delayed or missed because of the obstacles parents face in our current system. We cannot wait any longer for health reform, it is needed this year.

A couple of months ago, while working in a free clinic I saw an uninsured teenage girl. A few weeks prior she had fallen, injuring her leg. What started as a cut was now oozing and causing her to walk with a limp. When I asked her mother why she did not take her to the local ER, she said that she could not afford the cost. Because she had no insurance, and her care was delayed, she now had a deep infection. What could have been treated with local wound care now needed systemic antibiotics. If left untreated, it would have invaded her bone.

Fox News dismissed me and the other doctors at the White House as props with the headline, "Docs As Props." I am no prop - I am on the frontlines. As a pediatric resident, I have held parents hands as their children have died in the intensive care unit and spent countless nights away from my family to do what I love - taking care of children. All that I want to do is work in a health system that treats them all fairly. To call me a prop is beyond insulting, it is also untrue.

In the Rose Garden supporting the president in his health reform efforts were physicians from all 50 states as well as leaders from organizations like the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. We are not alone in supporting health reform.

A recent poll which appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine found that a majority of physicians support health reform. Leaders from both parties, including former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, Bob Dole and Bush Administration Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson support health reform. This is not a partisan issue - there is broad support for health reform this year.

There are over 46 million uninsured people in the United States - including 7 million children. An additional 25 million adults are underinsured. They are more likely to delay or not receive needed medical care - like my patient, they become sicker and require more expensive treatment.

We spend over \$2 trillion on healthcare each year - far more than any other country. We have the resources to ensure coverage for everyone.

The current legislation in the House and Senate goes a long way to make fundamental changes to our health system to make it more equitable and cost-effective. We have never been this close to fundamental reform of our health system. If we let this opportunity pass us by, more people will become uninsured and healthcare costs will just increase.

As a physician, I took an oath to "do no harm." It is our health system that is now doing the harm and it must change - our children deserve better.