

Mr. FINO. Mr. Cohen, I would like to join my colleague, the chairman of this committee, in congratulating you on your testimony here this morning. I agree with you that this question of medical care and research is a problem in this country, and it can become more serious, not only because of the shortage of doctors, but also because of the desire on the part of the doctors to specialize in medical fields rather than to concentrate on general practice. And this has become a problem. We have gotten away from the family doctor. We do not have that any more. They are all specialists. It may be because it attracts more money.

Would this legislation in your opinion be limited to organized groups?

Mr. COHEN. Yes, Mr. Fino. The concept of group that we would have here is that it must represent a number of professional people working together in some organized arrangement by which they agree on their responsibilities, and they agree upon how they are going to operate and deal with their financial arrangements.

I think, generally speaking, if I could put it this way, it at least involves, if you are going to a specialty group—by that I mean a group of pediatricians or a group of surgeons—at least three or more people working together. And if you had a more general group covering a wider range of service, there would have to be at least five full-time physicians in the organization in order to get the advantages of distributing this work over a number of people.

I think I can illustrate in this way, if I might—not necessarily because it is the most important, but it comes to mind easily, and it is easily explainable: If every doctor in the country has to have very high X-ray or cobalt machines, it is going to increase the cost of medical care in this country enormously. It is not the most efficient way to provide for these services if these machines and the professional personnel who operate them are not occupied, let us say, three-fourths of the day. This cost is ultimately borne by the consumer. If you can have a large enough group that can use this equipment, whether it is laboratory services, whether it is X-ray services, or any number of other things, its should help in keeping the cost of medical care in this country within a proper price range. I think that is a very important consideration.

Mr. FINO. Has any thought been given to the question of choice of doctors? This is a big open contention among the people that want to have the opportunity of picking their own doctor rather than being assigned a doctor. As you well know, there is a confidential relationship between the doctor and the patient, and the patient always feels better if he has a doctor of his own choice.

I am familiar with one of these programs or plans in New York City, the HIP plan. In fact, in 1950 I was a member of the Civil Service Commission in the city of New York, and I belonged to the HIP plan. Unfortunately, I was not too happy about it, because I was assigned to a group where I had a list of 20 doctors, and I couldn't find one of them that I knew, and I didn't know which doctor to go to on that list. And I felt that if I had a choice of doctors, it would be much better.

Another fault that I found with HIP—and I assume this applies to other groups—is that on several occasions when I did visit the hos-