Letter to the Editor

No air ambulance complaints leveled against Trinity . . .

To the Editor:

In response to a recent story in your paper, Trinity Health asserts our support for Senate Bill 2231, to ensure full transparency and eliminate unexpected bills for air transport services. For more than 25 years, we have provided efficient, appropriate air transport services throughout our region. Our long-established patient care practices demonstrate this support every day.

Of the nearly 40 complaints received by the state Insurance Department from 2013-2017 regarding large air ambulance bills, none were leveled against Trinity Health. This is not by chance but by design, as our organization follows ethical billing practices, consistently applies the appropriate rate, and fully engages the patient and family in understanding services and associated charges. While we appreciated the story's accompanying photo of our helicopter ambulance in flight, its presence within the story could suggest that our flight service was involved in the headline: "State attempts to control helicopter ambulance billings."

Trinity Health is a nonprofit, integrated healthcare system serving northwest/central North Dakota and Eastern Montana. Our NorthStar Criticair air transport service supports Trinity's mission to improve the health of our region. We provide hospital-to-hospital transfers and critical scene response within a 150-mile radius of Trinity Hospital for adult, pediatric, high-risk neonate, and high-risk labor/delivery patients. In addition, our regional fixed-wing service based in Williston is available 24/7 to transport patients from Williston and surrounding communities to Trinity or any other receiving facility.

NorthStar received 425 requests for transport in 2017. Again, none of those resulted in complaints about Trinity Health's billing practices. Ultimately, the behavior of one air ambulance company should not taint the good work and reputation of others that were not involved in a situation requiring legislative action. Our unwavering commitment to high-quality, patient-centered care has been our aim long before this unfortunate situation, and would continue to be with or without this law. It's how we fly.

Randy Schwan, MBA
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