Defensive medicine is the practice of providing medical services that may not be medically necessary but are provided to reduce the risk of a lawsuit. There are two types of defensive medicine:

- **Assurance defensive medicine**: This is the practice of ordering tests (including radiology tests), performing diagnostic procedures, and referring patients to specialists.
- **Avoidance defensive medicine**: This involves not performing high-risk procedures or procedures that may cause complications, and avoiding patients perceived as a liability, such as comorbidity patients who have complications like diabetes or high blood pressure.

Diagnostic defensive medicine practices are considered to have a much greater effect on costs than medical therapeutic defensive practices. The Massachusetts Medical Society published a study of physicians in 2009 that found that 93% of physicians in Pennsylvania reported practicing defensive medicine and that 13% of hospitalizations were the result of such practices. The society reported the findings of the study to the Joint Committee on Public Health and reported that the estimated cost of unnecessary medical testing and referrals in Massachusetts was $1.4 billion annually (Investigation of Defensive Medicine, 2009).

**Reference**