

On Universal Healthcare

A Moral Imperative Becomes A Political Football

By: Gary E Foresman, MD

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As a physician who has “opted out” of Medicare, you might find my stance on Medicare for all, or more appropriately Universal Healthcare (UH), surprising. As Mayor Pete has become so centrist, I have withdrawn my financial support of him and am leaning towards the Warren/Sanders camps. Why we need UH right now is because of the clear ethics involved. The base immorality of the insurance industry/big pharma drives people, through the fear of change, into believing that we need to take it slow so we can bankrupt and kill more Americans.

UH through a single payer “Medicare for all” plan would provide dramatic cost savings to everyone and is not “socialized medicine”. Firstly, socialized medicine means our government owns and runs the hospitals much like the Veterans Administration (VA), which is socialized medicine. Nor is it communism, which if you are a Fox viewer you believe it’s the same thing. Universal health care is a basic human right whereby no one gets left behind irrespective of their ability to pay.

Secondly, we are the *ONLY* industrialized country in the world not to offer UH! Yes, we are *that immoral and backwards*, and people wish to continue with the old system of capitalistic destruction of the middle class and the poor through the trap of private insurance. Trump’s current budget, with tax breaks for the rich and gutting Medicare/Medicaid/ and Social Security, tells us all we need to know about how fragile our country/health care system has become.

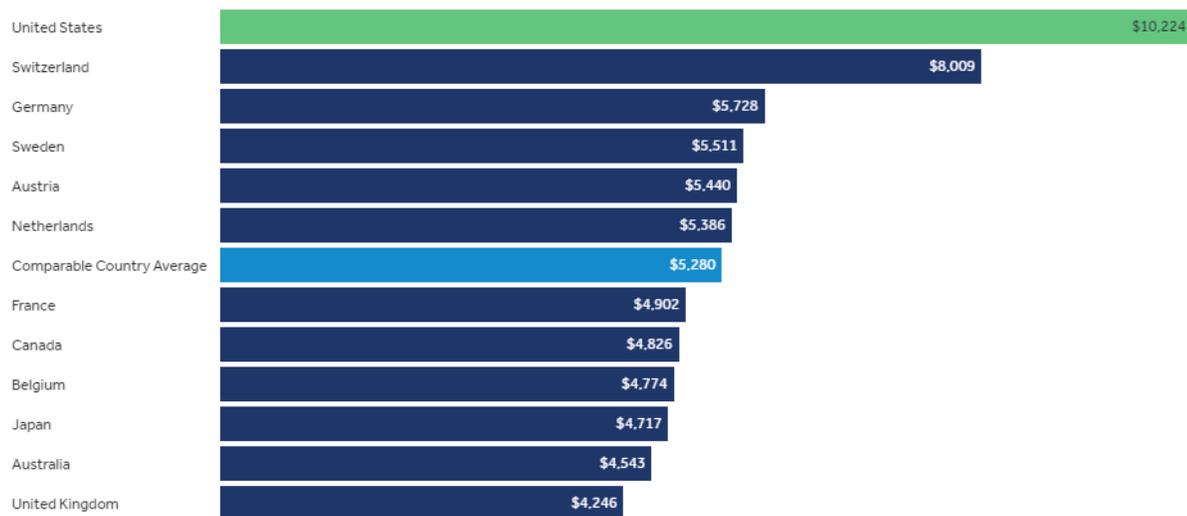
Journalist Dylan Scott’s article in Vox 01/29/20 “9 Things Americans Need to Learn from the Rest of the World’s Healthcare Systems” <https://www.vox.com/health-care/2020/1/29/21075388/medicare-for-all-what-countries-have-universal-health-care> beautifully lays out some of the pros and cons of different systems. Be clear, despite holding on to “American Exceptionalism”, the only arguments that we can’t do this are:

1. We are not smart enough,
2. Don’t care enough, or
3. We can’t afford it (apparently because we aren’t smart enough to figure out what every other wealthy country can).

Despite outspending everyone, let me refer you to a well-done article <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/health-spending-u-s-compare-countries/#item-start> (caveat, I do not specifically know these authors, but they do the best job of presenting data I have confirmed on multiple sites that require paid access) and share one chart from said article:

On average, other wealthy countries spend about half as much per person on health than the U.S. spends

Health consumption expenditures per capita, U.S. dollars, PPP adjusted, 2017



Notes: U.S. value obtained from National Health Expenditure data. Health consumption does not include investments in structures, equipment, or research.

So we spend more than everybody, but we're the best!; let me reference the WHO report on health care quality, the math is past me, but here is the article :

<https://www.who.int/healthinfo/paper30.pdf> . To cut to the chase, *we rank 37th* in the world and behind all nations with UH. We are far from the best.

So, let's get to the Americans aren't smart enough to figure out UH and it will cost too much. When you eliminate the insurance overlords of multiple insurance companies, costs decrease, when a single payer competes with drug companies, costs plummet. UH saves billions of dollars in American out of pocket expense, although taxes will go up, especially wealth taxes. Turbulence will come, private insurances will still exist for supplemental and extended care that those who can afford it. A two-tier system will continue for a while at least.

How do we deal with the immorality and xenophobia of the right (and some democrats!)? Vote them out of office of course! By harnessing the willingness to spend trillions of dollars on illegal wars on people of color, establishing concentration camps for people of color, this money, when redirected, can create the greatest healthcare system of all time.

Finally note the indentured servitude, pain, and death forced on us by the current private insurance-based system:

- 643,000 people per year *bankrupted* by medical bills in America, *Zero* bankruptcies per year due to medical bills in all industrialized countries but ours—is that what we call American Exceptionalism or what!
- *Un-insurance* causes 45,000 deaths per year in America—here is the article, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2775760/>. So is that what we mean by American Exceptionalism!?
- *Finally*, in “*Improving the Prognosis of Healthcare in the USA*” published in Lancet February 2020 we have the scientific documentation how Medicare for All will save Americans \$450 billion annually and save 68,000 lives annually. I know, a higher number than the last article, but you see the trend! [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)33019-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33019-3/fulltext)

Finally, I will link to John Oliver's special, on YouTube, where he eloquently (meaning he cusses a lot!) and accurately deals with the Fox republicans, and shows beautifully how horrible our "system" is. For those of you who think you lose "choice", you will see what we have is the illusion of choice, or more accurately the "choice" of how you get fu@#ed by this system.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Z2XRg3dy9k> Please Watch! Then watch again.

2020 has come, things are not lost yet (I hope). What I am pointing out is a system so evil and corrupt that it has to go. A politics of Love can conquer the transgressions of our past. Our country can lead in so many ways, and don't let anybody fool you into thinking we can't figure out basic human decency! Please don't wait, every single day we wait, 186 Americans die, every single day we wait, 1762 Americans are bankrupted by an evil system, and every single day we wait, we waste 1.23 billion dollars killing and bankrupting people we could be saving. This is not a difficult choice.

Everyone knows that we have a disease-care system, not a health-care system. This, too has to change, but that is another article.

Your Journey to Health and Healing,

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