Values, Economics, and the Universal Health Care Debate

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UIL Fall 2017 LD Debate Topic
RESOLVED: The United States federal government has a moral obligation to provide universal health care for its citizens.

Debating Universal Health Care

http://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debates/universal-health-coverage-should-be-federal-governments-responsibility

A history of why the US is the only rich country without universal health care

QUARTZ

- Single-payer health-care (in which the government pays for universal coverage, typically through taxes) helps keep costs down for two reasons:
- government can regulate and negotiate the price of drugs and medical services,
- and it eliminates the need for a vast private health-insurance bureaucracy.

https://qz.com/1022831/why-doesnt-the-united-states-have-universal-health-care/
Let’s talk for a minute about medical care vs healthcare.

...the distinction between these two phrases [is] very clear.

Physicians, after all, deliver medical care to their patients. They do not deliver “health” to patients.

A patient’s health condition is partly their responsibility. It is an individual responsibility for all of us to take the best care of ourselves that we can.

Heath Care and Behavior

Most medical costs in U.S. are behavior related.

Poor health from: smoking, obesity/diabetes, excess alcohol and sugar, poor diet, lack of exercise and sleep, stress. (Federal campaign promoting “food pyramid” and for low-fat diets were misguided.)

So if health care is personal responsibility, and much turns on good diet and exercise, how would universal health care be managed? Diet controls and mandatory exercise?

Proposals for guaranteed income with some amount automatically for health insurance.

Does universal health insurance = universal heath care?

Mixed vs. Universal Health Care

Health care/medical care in U.S. is a mixed private/government system. State regulations and spending are significant.

Universal health care has benefits and costs, but suffers from incentive problems. Review of National Health Care in U.K. and Canada. (Current U.S. health care also has incentive problems.)

[A] comparison of the British National Health Service and California’s Kaiser Permanente [...] found that Kaiser provided more comprehensive and convenient primary care and more rapid access to specialists for roughly the same cost.
Hard to define best practices for health and medical care...

- Recommended medical procedures are different in France, Germany, England, and U.S. Why?
- ...Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)... is what we refer to as Eastern medicine, in contrast to the Western medicine we know from U.S. hospitals....it somehow involves herbs and that many Chinese people used it.

https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-doctor-is-listening/201301/6-lessons-we-can-learn-eastern-chinese-medicine

By the early 20th century, organized medicine had succeeded in passing medical licensing laws in virtually every state.

These laws defined who could practice medicine and who could not.

For the most part, nurses, physician’s assistants and paramedical personnel could not provide any medical services unless they were employees of doctors or worked under their supervision.


By the second decade of the 20th century, organized medicine succeeded in controlling entry into the profession by outlawing for-profit medical schools and gaining control of admission to the non-profits.

By mid-century, they almost succeeded in driving for-profit companies out of the hospital marketplace. ... With the hospitals firmly under control, health insurance was next. Blue Cross was created by the hospitals and Blue Shield was created by the doctors.

The second wave of reformers sought not to repeal the mistakes of the past. They sought instead to pile new regulations on top of old ones. All this is ably described in Greg Scandlen’s new book.

Have you ever wondered why we have been granting generous tax relief to people who get health insurance at work for the last 70 years, while not giving similar tax relief to people who buy insurance on their own?

So... a century of supply-side and also demand-side distortions to medical care and health insurance caused by state and federal regulations and tax policies.

**Health Care and Values**

- Utilitarian vs. Natural Rights
- Utilitarian arguments for and against universal health care
- Natural rights arguments for and against universal health care
- Problems added by not knowing what good/best health care looks like...
- Mental health care? Medicating students for the good of others?

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We can’t know what ideal education and health care system would look like...

Policy Debate – 2017-2018 Topic

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its funding and/or regulation of elementary and/or secondary education in the United States.

Open societies explore and discover solutions to perceived problems from education to health care to housing, transportation, etc....