



Four Related Posits on Universal Health Care

1. **"The U. S. electorate is neither willing to pay for universal health care, nor to accept rationing of health care." Agree 50, Disagree 23**
2. **"Most politicians are neither willing to risk losing an election through truth telling, nor to do whatever is necessary to provide universal health care." Agree 63, Disagree 5**
3. **"The nation is neither able to pay the economic costs of universal health care, nor to initiate change that could lead to universal health care." Agree 36 Disagree 35**
4. **"Truly universal health care will never be achieved by design or by a 'revolution in health care'. But it will evolve slowly and inevitably as a consequence of technologic change." Agree 32, Disagree 48**

WE LEAVE TO THE READER any inference to be drawn from the numbers above. They don't add up because many responded to one or two posits. We think you will find the commentary below to be particularly cogent and interesting. Recall that our purpose is to encourage dialogue among members, rather than to conduct a poll.

Posits do not necessarily reflect the views of SSV Medicine, the Medical Society, or Board of Directors.

"The concept of 'rationing' healthcare would necessarily include a reduction in available options and freedom of choice. The public would need to be educated re the ethical concept of distributive justice, and willing to accept the least expensive diagnostic and therapeutic options that are effective. Also, mandatory preventive health measures and screening measures for early signs of disease or disease risk, as well as regulatory or financial consequence for high risk behavior, might be necessary for a universal health plan to work. I believe that what the average person wants as 'universal healthcare' is care that is immediate, on demand, using the most expensive technology and medications, cost free, risk free, and with no negative outcomes. It would take a massive educational and public relations effort to gain any degree of public acceptance of what is needed. I don't think that this society is ready for it." - Elliot Mazer, MD

"I think that true universal health care will occur only if there is a mindset shift...on what we consider 'universal health care.' We cannot afford the expensive universal health care that all of us desire with coverage of every medical condition, at any age, with any prognosis, and any...treatment. We need to decide as a nation to offer coverage of some conditions and set appropriate guidelines on treatment and then we can we afford (as a nation) some basic level of 'universal health care.'" - Sangeeta Marwaha, MD

"My reply to 1) I think that the electorate is willing to pay for health care as long as they know what they are getting and what they need to do about it. A free handout should be removed. An innovative way to pay back to the system must be created. A portion of the taxes should be apportioned for this and it must be universal to the citizenry. 2) The word is 'most' [politicians]... Some have addressed the issue no matter how unpopular this may sound. 16 years ago Hillary Clinton...attempted to do so, but was beaten down..., she did something that a majority of politicians cower away from, and [that] does indeed show some greatness of mind. Look at the history of England's William Wilberforce; he pushed health care changes and accomplished it, he was a politician and did away with a lot of social ills way before the USA even thought of it... 3)...If we put avarice aside and see if we can accomplish some common good collectively, we can do it. 4) Technological

changes do not always solve problems; they sometimes, and presently more often than not, complicate things and make situations worse..." - Elisabeth Matthew, MD

"When the system crashes and burns we will be appalled to see what emerges as the next system." - Tom Wilkes, MD

"I believe we first need to decisively replace the predatory, personal injury...system with a responsible...justice system and then turn health care back into an area where the individual carries a substantial part of the responsibility for his own health care before any consideration can be given to a successful universal health care transformation." - William Johnson, MD

"I think cost control should be put in the hands of the patient." - Richard J. Frink, MD

"I never believed that healthcare was a 'right,' but I do believe the government has a responsibility to take care of its citizens. If Canada and Britain and other countries can do it, we should [too]. I like the idea of the 4th statement, but it sounds a lot like a plot for a science fiction" - Ronald Rodgers, MD

"It would be difficult to enact universal health care in this country because of all the competing interests and lobbies that want to keep the system the way it is and that make it seem as if the ONLY problem with our current system is that there is not enough money to cover more people in it." - Teresa Flores, MD

"I think we're getting closer to being able to make the necessary changes but unfortunately not there yet. We'll see if this election helps at all." - Jason Flamm, MD

"A recent Harris Poll (12/07) commissioned by the Mayo Clinic Health Policy Center found that 85 percent of American adults 'are opposed to paying more taxes to achieve health care reform.' Unfortunately, our healthcare 'nonsystem' may have to deteriorate even further before we, as a nation, will be willing to make any substantial or meaningful changes." - Ralph Koldinger, MD

"I do not think universal healthcare is a worthy goal.... [It] is often delayed or substandard in quality, as demonstrated in other countries where it now exists. I have no problem with people who pay for their insurance or get it through work having access to better health care. It is a motivator to strive for success which is the basis of a free market economy in the first place. But from a business standpoint, it is ludicrous to not give universal preventive healthcare, which is far cheaper, and to then absorb the cost of much more serious acute problems..." - Kelly Sharrar, MD

"I expect that the health care 'system' will come under more and more pressure as the 'age wave' crashes over our society;...baby boomer politicians, and their constituents, as they face the challenges of caring for family members who are living longer than anyone expected, and who are saddled with chronic medical conditions that are equally unexpected.... I hope that this crisis is not shoved out of sight simply by shipping patients and money to nursing homes; instead I hope that more and more families learn first-hand about our broken health care system, and insist on change." - Alfredo Czerwinski, MD

"To my concern, the federal government will impose universal health care upon us, without much input or consultation." - Norman Label, MD

"In health care policy, we can trade off between quality, access, and cost. We have very high quality health care [yet] making it available to everyone would be incredibly expensive. Many people are appalled at the concept of rationing health care, little realizing that it's that or ration by who can afford what. And when it comes to paying for health care, people want to eat steak and pay for hamburger. They want up-to-the minute health care delivered by a host of superbly trained providers, with cultural sensitivity and fluency in their language, using the very best diagnostic and treatment tools and medications available...for 49 cents. If we took the money that we now spend on what we could call 'administration' - insurance plan administration, utilization review, health plan profits, multi-million-dollar salaries for health care executives - and added in the money

we waste in other ways, we might be able to afford a basic plan for everyone. Paying for universal coverage would be easier if we took...prevention more seriously." - Janet O'Brien, MD

"The government is already responsible for over half of all health care costs. Extending it to the remaining population would not be a stretch." - Sidney Scudder, MD

"Universal health care is an excuse for another governmental boondoggle. One has only to look at any federally run program to see the consequence of such a decision. I can look back to my days at the VA hospital system to see how badly managed medical care will be. Our society has to change its attitude about health care as a 'right' not covered in the Constitution and look at it as a service provided by competition which will provide more options to the consumer through more, not less providers." - Michael Robbins, MD

"The first mistake is to assume that universal health care is desirable. I do not agree that all people should have access to ALL services. This country has some serious issues to deal with in regards to rationing scarce resources like healthcare. Technology is the number one cost driver.... Everyone assumes that it is a right to have access through the latest technology, yet we are not allowed to interfere or judge whether unqualified/unsuited people should continue to have children.... Doctors' pay should not suffer to make ends meet. Let the medical technology companies and drug companies shoulder the burden of rising healthcare costs." - Eric Schwartz, MD

"Universal health care is essential.... Every health care provider and employee in the US healthcare industry should be actively supporting universal...health care. There is already more than enough financial resources.... It is simply mis-distributed with... inappropriately funding over charged care for those with access while rationing access to others through lack of professional resource availability or unreasonable charges discouraging user access. Universal 'Insurance' should not be considered synonymous with Universal Access. While it can be secured with universal coverage, there are pre-funding options that do not require private insurance company regulation to assure universal access." - Michelle Famula, MD

"Until the public (and politicians) understand that they are already paying the cost of universal healthcare without receiving the benefits, it will be impossible to achieve universal coverage and access. There exists a significant deficit of knowledge on how health care in this country is funded and provided." - Kathy Gaspar, MD

"We clearly need universal health coverage as the system we are using at present is not working. [But] I do think that we will achieve this..." - James Martel, MD

"At the present time the challenge is not universal health care, but the gross inefficiencies that now exist in the care we deliver,...making the costs unsustainable. We cannot afford UHC. Whether we could effect the necessary changes or not is unanswerable, the bottom line is we will have to. Technology is only one part of the equation." - Gary Fields, MD

"Although I agree with the first part of #4, I disagree that technologic change will cause the evolution. My sense is that the system is depleting its financing right now and as more and more of the 'haves' of our society discover this through injury to themselves or their loved ones, they will slowly begin to accept/demand change." - Bette Hinton, MD

"A superb review of the problem and potential solutions can be found in a recent book by Shannon Brownlee, "Overtreated". As she clearly documents, we can afford it if we are willing to change the perverse incentives in our current compensation system." - Stan Gambrill, MD

"...I think...many politicians agree with #4 and therefore #2 would not apply. I believe the U.S. cannot afford universal health care and that rationing of care is unacceptable. We need health insurance companies competing nationwide to lower costs and evolve to low cost policies for young healthy people." - Stephen R. Shapiro, MD

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