

The Right Way to Health Care

Robert Curlee

INTRODUCTION

A right to health care means that government is morally obligated and responsible to do all within its means to ensure that medically necessary care, regardless of ability to pay, whether provided in the private or public sectors, is available and accessible to all.

Health care as a right does not mean “free” care.

SIGNIFICANCE

- 28.5 million people in the United States (8.8% of the US population) do not have health insurance (ProCon, 2019).
- A right to health care would end medical bankruptcies, improve public health, and help small businesses (ProCon, 2019).
- The United States guarantees all citizens an education, access to fire and police services, a national postal service, protection by the military, a national park system, and many other federal and state-funded services. But the country has not yet committed to ensuring that all of its citizens have health care coverage (Bauchner, 2017).
- The United States provides health care coverage to those that serve in the military and those that serve time in our prisons (O’Rourke, 2017).
- Medicare provides health care coverage for our older population and the disabled (O’Rourke, 2017).
- A 2018 survey published by Beker’s Healthcare found that 22% of Americans found paying their deductible was “very difficult” or “impossible” and 64% reported that they delayed or did not seek medical care due to costs (Kukulka, 2018).

POSITION STATEMENT

Health care is a human service that should be provided by need independent of ability to pay, not a commodity to be allocated as a market good based on ability to pay.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- The Declaration of Independence states that all men have “unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (Declaration of Independence transcript, 2019). The pursuit of happiness is lost when preservation of life is reduced to a market commodity.
- Italy, Spain, France, Australia, Israel, and Norway have all instituted a right to health care. Citizens in these countries live up to five years longer than people in the United States (ProCon, 2019).
- Medical debt is the #1 reason people file for bankruptcy in the United States (ProCon, 2019).
- United States health statistics, such as infant mortality or longevity, which were among the best a half century ago, are now among the lowest of industrialized countries (O’Rourke, 2017)
- Markets can be effective and efficient in allocating resources based on ability to pay but are not intended to be equitable and fair. Markets are inherently unfair. With respect to health care, markets also efficiently and effectively decide who does or does not get health care (O’Rourke, 2017).
- The United States economy loses \$65-\$130 billion annually as a result of diminished worker productivity, due to poor health and premature deaths, among the uninsured (ProCon, 2019).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Advocacy for public policies conducive to health, in order to promote the health of all, is an essential component of any Health Education professional organization (O’Rourke, 2017).
- ANA believes every single person, including nurses, should have access to the highest quality and safest care. Health care is a basic human right. For decades, we have used the experience and expertise of our members to fight for that right, and for meaningful health care reform (American Nurses Association, 2020).
- The Code of Ethics of Nurses states: “Moral respect accords moral worth and dignity to all human beings regardless of their personal attributes or life situation” (American Nurses Association, 2015).



THE RIGHT TO HEALTH MEANS ACCESS TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE THAT IS

- TIMELY
- GOOD QUALITY
- AFFORDABLE
- ACCEPTABLE
- APPROPRIATE

World Health Organization #HealthforAll

Gender, equity and human rights (World Health Organization, 2017)

CONCLUSION

Health care should be a basic right for every person. It should not be a privilege to be healthy. It should not be prohibitively expensive to be healthy. Soldiers in our military rightly deserve health care. Does the American workforce deserve less? Prisoners are given health care. Should someone commit a crime to get health care? Should life-saving surgery wipe away a lifetime of savings? “The solution for how to achieve health care coverage for all may be uniquely American, but it is an exceedingly important and worthy goal, emblematic of a fair and just society” (Bauchner, 2017).

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