

Healthy Connections

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Black Healthcare: Bad and Getting Worse

By: William Reed, Black Press

Do you: do without a regular doctor, have unmet healthcare needs, or often forego expensive medicines you need? Access to health care and facilities in America is directly related to income and race and blacks are dying for the need of health care.

As an African in America you probably get fewer medical options, operations, tests, medications, and other life-saving treatments than whites and as a result have suffer from the poorest health in the United States.

America Lags Behind

The American health system lags in activities toward improving African Americans' health outcomes. The country spends \$2 trillion - \$6,290 per capita- annually for health care, but denies access to health care based on abilities to pay. More

than 886,000 deaths could have been prevented from 1991 to 2000 if African Americans had received the same care as whites. Five times as many lives can be saved by correcting the disparities in care between whites and blacks.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

No single factor contributes more to racial and ethnic disparities in health and access to health care than health insurance. Forty-seven million Americans are uninsured. Forty-three percent of African Americans are uninsured, compared to twenty-three percent of whites.

Political proposals for universal health care are promising developments toward addressing the vast inequities in African Americans' health status.

Africans Receive Less Care

Although America has the highest rated equipment, medical doctors and procedures in the world, health care among African Americans is at Third World levels. Blacks remain much less likely to undergo heart bypasses, appendectomies and other common procedures. They receive fewer mammograms and basic tests and drugs for heart disease and diabetes, and continually fall even further behind whites in controlling those two major killers.

Universal Health Care

With America's documented racial and ethnic disparities, African Americans would benefit from universal healthcare coverage as soon as possible. Actually, all Americans will benefit under a universal health care

system. Americans annually pay \$1,821 more per capita on healthcare than Switzerland, yet ours is the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee access to health care as a right of citizenship. Twenty-eight industrialized nations have single payer universal health care systems.

Insurance vs. Universal Healthcare

Universal healthcare has been almost taboo on the national stage for more than a decade. Now, there needs to be massive movements to make the changes needed to assure all Americans get equal care.

Profit Opposition

Insurance companies represent the largest political opposition to a universal healthcare plan. They are against any regulations limiting their abilities to make profits. If enacted, universal healthcare could put health insurance providers out of business. Therefore, insurance companies donate millions to oppose the measure.

Wealthy Opposition

Many health care providers feel entitled to the market value for the services they provide and that they should not be restricted by government intervention. Also adamantly opposed to universal healthcare are the nation's wealthiest taxpayers. They don't feel they should be responsible for paying for the healthcare of the poor. Congress relies heavily on such contributors and is reluctant to support universal healthcare.

Voter Rejection

One way the U.S. Congress sidestepped the issue was by introducing initiatives onto state ballots and "letting constituents decide directly". To date, pushing the issue to state levels and placing the burden of deciding on a universal healthcare plan on the voters has resulted in overwhelming voter rejection.

Health Care Legislation

Get good health care and you will live longer. All African Americans must pursue getting universal healthcare legislation passed where they live, so more of us can live better and longer.

From APEDF:

The previous article has good statistics and information, but does not necessarily represent the position of APEDF. This organization believes that the health contradictions and disparities faced by African people in the U.S. will not be resolved with simple reform of health care, as this does not explain the disparities in so many other areas of black life. And, in the absence of quality and equal health care, we have to do what we can to prevent illness and disease.

Join the APEDF Wellness Program to address these grave disparities and improve individual and collective health of the African community. Help promote fitness and health through the All People's TyRon Lewis Community Gym, and monthly health education newsletters and seminars.



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