

# *A med student's view of our dysfunctional health system*



**Alan Chan**

MY VIEW

“Hi, my name is —.”

When I walked in as part of my medical training, I was cut off by the sounds of a distraught mom and a 2-year-old patient in respiratory distress. For over two weeks, this girl had been sick with flu and subsequent pneumonia, which was now preventing her from breathing properly. Her fever wasn't breaking, her lungs weren't getting sufficient air, and I quickly called my attending physician over to see whether she'd need to be hospitalized.

Why did they wait so long to seek help? A medical office can be an intimidating place. But it was the cost of accessing health care that prevented them – like many other patients – from visiting. Compared with those who are privately insured, uninsured patients

are five times as likely to postpone or forgo needed medical care because of high out-of-pocket costs.

The Affordable Care Act increased access to health care through the creation of the Marketplace, Medicaid expansion and non-discrimination laws. Uninsured rates fell nationwide, with 20 million people gaining access to care.

However, ACA wasn't perfect. Marketplace options used private insurance companies that profit off enrollees; Medicaid expansion didn't occur in 18 states, resulting in the “Medicaid Gap”; and premiums remained too high for many to afford. Currently 29 million people remain without coverage, including 2.5 million in Florida. Furthermore, congressional leaders are threatening to immediately repeal ACA without a replacement in hand.

We need a simplified system that controls health-care spending, reduces out-of-pocket costs and provides equal access for everyone. All of those are achievable through a single-payer system.

The FSU College of Medicine teaches us medical students not only to learn about health-care issues but also to advocate for our patients. Each year, the college hosts a student-run series of educational segments during Cover the Uninsured Week. We learn about the impact of being uninsured or underinsured and the ways we can advocate for our patients.

Thursday, we're inviting the community to hear Chicago physician Susan Rogers, M.D., a board member of Physicians for a National Health Program. She'll explain how a national health program could reduce U.S. health disparities in a sustainable and cost-effective way. To me, it sounds like a good alternative for that 2-year-old and her mom. See what you think.

*Alan Chan is a second-year student and director of this year's Cover the Uninsured Week events. Second-year student Charlie Ingram contributed to this column. Susan Rogers will speak at 4 p.m. Thursday at the FSU College of Medicine, 1115 W. Call St. If you plan to attend, RSVP to Chan at [ac11c@med.fsu.edu](mailto:ac11c@med.fsu.edu).*