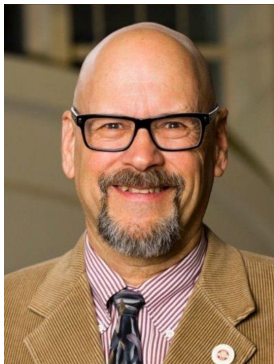


Is 'Medicare for All' really unrealistic?

Ken Brummel-Smith, My View 7:08 p.m. EST January 27, 2016



There has been much in the news lately about the “single payer” health insurance reform idea, or so-called “Medicare for All,” and whether it is realistic or politically unfeasible. I have been a member of the Physicians for a National Health Program, the original proponents of this idea, for more than 20 years. I've also been practicing medicine since 1978 so I have some idea of how things work in medicine.

Here are the facts:

1. The single-payer system is the only health reform that will pay for itself. By replacing the thousands of private insurers — each with its own marketing, billing and corporate profits — estimates of savings range from \$400 billion to \$600 billion. This alone would cover the 30 million people who don't have health insurance now.
2. Studies have shown that 95 percent of Americans would come out ahead financially. They would not have to pay as much in taxes for this program (it would be funded through a progressive tax) as they pay now for their health insurance.
3. Doctors and hospitals would be freed from the huge burden they deal with in having to bill hundreds of different insurers. That would add more savings to the cost of health care, and more time they have to see patients.
4. Surveys show a majority of both patients and doctors favor a single-payer system.
5. It would fix some of the problems of the Affordable Care Act —such as rapidly rising premiums and copays. It would also cover things not in the ACA — like dental and long-term care.

So who fights Medicare for All? It is the insurance companies (they won't be needed), the pharmaceutical companies (they don't want to negotiate to have fair pricing) and the for-profit medical-industrial complex (they want to keep the money flowing in, from your pockets).

So the question Americans need to answer is: Do you want to keep the “reality” of our current system, which doesn't work and empties your wallet, or do you want a system that saves money, is easier to use and is fairer. Which one is realistic?

What can you do to help make “Medicare for All” a reality? Ask your representatives to support and co-sponsor HR 676. (It has 60 co-sponsors, but Gwen Graham has not signed on.) Physicians can join the Physicians for a National Health Program (www.php.org (<http://www.php.org>)). Citizens can join HealthCare-Now! (www.healthcare-now.org (<https://www.healthcare-now.org>)). Finally, people can speak up at Democratic and Republican forums to call for the truth.

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