



GUEST COLUMN - DR. STEPHEN PATRICK

I am no prop; doctors are on the frontlines in the healthcare debate

Posted: 6:23 a.m. October 11, 2009

13 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

This past Monday, I had the pleasure of being invited to the White House to talk about health reform. While shaking hands with the president in the Rose Garden is an honor, I did not come for him - I came for my patients. Too often I have seen care delayed or missed because of the obstacles parents face in our current system. We cannot wait any longer for health reform, it is needed this year.

A couple of months ago, while working in a free clinic I saw an uninsured teenage girl. A few weeks prior she had fallen, injuring her leg. What started as a cut was now oozing and causing her to walk with a limp. When I asked her mother why she did not take her to the local ER, she said that she could not afford the cost. Because she had no insurance, and her care was delayed, she now had a deep infection. What could have been treated with local wound care now needed systemic antibiotics. If left untreated, it would have invaded her bone.

Fox News dismissed me and the other doctors at the White House as props with the headline, "Docs As Props." I am no prop - I am on the frontlines. As a pediatric resident, I have held parents hands as their children have died in the intensive care unit and spent countless nights away from my family to do what I love - taking care of children. All that I want to do is work in a health system that treats them all fairly. To call me a prop is beyond insulting, it is also untrue.



Dr. Stephen Patrick poses outside the White House last Monday where he and other physicians met with President Obama.

In the Rose Garden supporting the president in his health reform efforts were physicians from all 50 states as well as leaders from organizations like the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. We are not alone in supporting health reform.

A recent poll which appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine found that a majority of physicians support health reform. Leaders from both parties, including former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, Bob Dole and Bush Administration Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson support health reform. This is not a partisan issue - there is broad support for health reform this year.

There are over 46 million uninsured people in the United States - including 7 million children. An additional 25 million adults are underinsured. They are more likely to delay or not receive needed medical care - like my patient, they become sicker and require more expensive treatment.

We spend over \$2 trillion on healthcare each year - far more than any other country. We have the resources to ensure coverage for everyone.

Related Articles:

10/22: [Enhancement millage would just throw more money at a broken system](#)

10/22: [Millage needed for strong schools and strong community](#)

10/21: [Kathleen Parker commends decriminalization of medical marijuana and then goes further](#)

10/21: [Bills for failing to deal with Michigan's budget woes are coming due](#)

10/21: [More Michigan employers offering consumer-driven health insurance plans](#)

The current legislation in the House and Senate goes a long way to make fundamental changes to our health system to make it more equitable and cost-effective. We have never been this close to fundamental reform of our health system. If we let this opportunity pass us by, more people will become uninsured and healthcare costs will just increase.

As a physician, I took an oath to "do no harm." It is our health system that is now doing the harm and it must change - our children deserve better.

Stephen Patrick, MD, MPH, is a house officer in the [Department of Pediatrics](#) at the University of Michigan. He works at [C.S. Mott Children's Hospital](#) as well as in the U-M outpatient clinics.

[Login](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Manage Your Newspaper Subscription](#) | [Advertise With Us](#)

© 2009 AnnArbor.com LLC and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Use of and/or registration on any portion of this site constitutes acceptance of our User Agreement and Privacy Policy.

[Share this post](#)

Tags: [Guest Column](#), [healthcare](#), [opinion](#)

13 Comments:

Good for you Dr. Patrick. Too many people who have insurance do not realize they are an "asset" to there insurance company as long as their premium's are paid and they only make minor claims. As soon as they become seriously ill they become a liability on balance sheet's of their insurance provider. That provider is NOT your friend. They do NOT care about your health. They care that they take in more cash than they pay out and a client is just a commodity on the bottom line.



[craig11152](#)

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

In Michigan there is the MICHild program. It covers:

- Regular checkups
- Shots
- Emergency care
- Dental care
- Pharmacy
- Hospital care
- Prenatal care and delivery
- Vision and hearing
- Mental health and substance abuse services

And is only \$10.00 per month per family! NOT per child.

To qualify, children must:

- Be citizens of the U.S. (some legal immigrants qualify)
- Live in Michigan, even for a short time
- Be under 19 years old
- Have no health insurance
- Meet the income requirements

to apply online, go to:

<https://eform.state.mi.us/michild/intro1.htm> or call

toll-free 1-888-988-6300

The State of Michigan also offers the Healthy Kids program which covers many more items than listed above.

In Washtenaw County there is the Washtenaw Health Plan (WHP) and Washtenaw County Prescription Plan.

Washtenaw Health Plan covers medically necessary health care services including:

- Doctor/Clinic Visits
- Outpatient lab and X-ray tests
- Prescriptions from pharmacies if on the list of covered drugs
- Limited mental health services
- Hospitalization at University of Michigan Hospital or St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Washtenaw County
- ER visits for true emergencies



clara

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Thank you for this. I worry a lot about losing my health insurance. Reform would relieve some of that.



Dagny J

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

I am curious about Dr. Stephen Patrick. In the photo he is wearing a U of M lab coat. U of M has no doctor with the last name Patrick in their data base. UM does have two employees with this name. One is a Custodian II, Building Services the other a Student, Graduate Engineering.

The state of Michigan lists a STEPHEN WILLARD PATRICK with a Medical Doctor - Educational Limited license with a UM address. I guess if this is the same Dr. Stephen Patrick his complete career having been at UM I can understand his lacking any knowledge of the possible negative consequences of the bills currently before the legislature for health care reform.

The GAO says only half of those uninsured would be covered by the current proposals but will cut money from medicare and tax those who are deemed to have too much coverage and those who do not get coverage.

The bills do nothing towards tort reform nor do they address the lack of insurance companies being able to sell coverage across state lines. We already have COBRA protection for continuing healthcare coverage after losing a job. Many people, like my 19 year old son, chose not to pay for coverage. These plans will make him either pay a tax or buy coverage he does not want to help offset the costs covering us older Americans.



clara

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Clara - he is a house officer (that means he is in training, which is why he holds an educational limited license).

Dr. Patrick - I hope you use your enthusiasm and energy to talk to our state legislators about the proposed 3% tax on physicians. Maybe explain to them that taxing doctors (alone) to cure the state's budget deficit is not a good idea. Maybe explain to them that taxing doctors will reduce the number of physicians who accept Medicaid (only 1 in 4 doctors do take it, including the MIChild program mentioned above). Maybe explain to them that doctors will no longer buy vaccines or medications for patients because of this tax. Perhaps enlighten them about how it will be difficult to recruit doctors to stay in Michigan when they could go to another of the 49 states and not be taxed. Perhaps you are doing this already. But if you have not, then yes (sadly) you are indeed a "prop" and a puppet.



1bit

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

clara, I am assuming that if your son comes down with an illness tomorrow, that you will not ask the taxpayers to shell out one dime to cover any of his health expenses. You would prefer, in fact, that he choose not to have health insurance and not receive any medical treatment that he cannot afford out of his own income or savings.
This all sounds great...until it happens to you and your family.



Dagny J

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

The one statement that stands out is "Too often I have seen care DELAYED or MISSED because of the obstacles parents face in our current system."
Now throw a layer of Government management on top of what we have in this current system and watch those two emphasized words find new meaning.
Ask yourself: Is the Government quick to respond to anything? Do Government programs operate efficiently? Does the Government predict costs well? Is Social Security about to go bankrupt? Is Medicaid about to go bankrupt? Is Medicare about to go bankrupt? Has any Government program been labeled a "success"? Do you want the IRS to do your taxes? Do you really want the Government deeply involved in your healthcare?
Sure we need health care changes - just NOT this proposed takeover, which WILL drive you away from your coverage and FINE you if you lack coverage.



Do not taunt Happy Fun Ball

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

I'm sure most people are agree that something should be done. But many don't like what Obama has planned.
Cuts to Medicare.
Increased taxes on middle class.
Exploding state budgets.
Wont bring us to 100% coverage.
Wont reduce costs.
Does nothing for tort reform.
Doesn't uncouple insurance from work.
Does anyone find it ironic that the big greedy evil insurance companies are guaranteed more business under Obama Care? You wont ready that in the NYT.
Do people realize that the taxes for Obama care start years before the benefits begin? That's the shell game they play to get the BCO report they want on CNN.
Rather than do something we should do something better than Obama care.



in4mation

Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Why didn't he tell the girls mother that any public funded hospital like U of M can't turn the girl away on the basis of ability to pay?



capt



Posted Oct 11

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

"Why didn't he tell the girls mother that any public funded hospital like U of M can't turn the girl away on the basis of ability to pay?"
You still get billed... and billed... and billed. In fact you never stop getting billed till you either pay up or file bankruptcy.



craig11152

Posted Oct 12

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Face it, you were definitely a prop and continue to be! The majority of doctors hate the current legislation bills. You are doing exactly what they wanted you to do. "Do no harm" meant give everyone the care they need, not let people die for the sake of saving money! It also meant not being a pawn of an administration that demands people not get care for the good of society...



Billy Mays' Ghost

Posted Oct 13

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Health Care for America Now (HCAN) is a big supporter of this big push by the president. HCAN is made up of many organizations including "U of M Medical Students", and Dr. Stephen Patrick is from where? Is this a coincidence? Is he a member of either of these organizations? Who paid for his appearance? Why were only supporters invited unless this was only to be a photo op for the president?



clara

Posted Oct 13

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

I read your article in the AA news, would like to invite you to speak at a rally in AA on the 31st for health care reform. Need your email address to contact you. We are a citizens group and U of M faculty people.



sandy

Posted Oct 14

[\(Flag this Post\)](#)

Showing 13 Comments. [Comment Now](#)