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The Power Structure for Deadly Lag and the Prophetic Work of Unsung Heroes

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Kicking life-saving solutions endlessly down the road is the mark of the brutish power of the corporations over the innocents.

Fifty years ago, medical research warned about the overuse of antibiotics creating mutations of resistant bacterium, making these drugs less effective. Dr. Sidney Wolfe warned about this criminal negligence again and again, along with other colleagues. But the drug companies kept over-promoting to get physicians to over-prescribe. Today, antibiotic resistance takes over 100,000 lives a year just in the U.S. Some bacterium are mutating beyond the ability of medical science to catch up with new more powerful antibiotics to curb new antibiotic resistance bacterium.

Deadly Lag Time.

For decades, starting in the 1970s, at the very least, both the big oil companies and knowledgeable government officials warned about global warming. Exxon's own scientists sounded the alarm internally as well. Now with little preparedness to move fast from fossil fuels to renewables and conserve energy, the climate crisis is upon the world. Mega storms, floods, wildfires, and rising sea levels threaten everything and everybody. As James Gustave Speth's forthcoming book, *They Knew: The U.S. Federal Government's Fifty-Year Role in Causing the Climate Crisis*, people knew, including the graphic, forecast report in 1993, now forgotten, authored by Bill Clinton and Al Gore who promptly gave the auto industry an eight-year holiday from the regulatory push on fuel efficiency.

Deadly Lag Time.

Great physicians such as Quentin Young, Arnold Relman, Steffie Woolhandler, and David Himmelstein warned of the avoidable casualties and price gouging if we did not enact single-payer universal health insurance. They were ignored. The delay is costing trillions of dollars and about 100,000 lives a year with many more injuries and illnesses for those unable to afford health insurance to get a timely diagnosis and treatment.

Dr. Philip Lee supported a study by Harvard Medical School physicians back in the early 1990s, estimating the huge fatality toll annually from medical malpractice just in hospitals. In 2015, Johns Hopkins medical researchers reported a minimum of 250,000 deaths a year from preventable problems in hospitals excluding clinics and doctors' offices. The prophets warned, but the power structure, including the media, turned a largely deaf ear.

Deadly Lag Time.

Walter Hang, an environmental scientist, has warned for years about the toxic nature of fluids used in fracking of gas and oil. He and others mobilized people in New York state to persuade Gov. Andrew Cuomo to ban the practice, unlike the increasingly poisoned fracking sites in Pennsylvania and other fracking states. Now we have been told by scientists that a chemical used in the mining breaks down into a toxic giant called PFAS, which they call a "forever" pollutant endangering underground drinking water sources.

Deadly Lag Time.

Over twenty-five years ago, scientists spoke out against the rising epidemic now known as the opioid disaster, promoted by drug companies and their owners like the Sackler family. The government and medical professions dillydallied. Last year, a record 90,000 people died in America from drug overdoses, mostly from opioids.

Deadly Lag Time.

In the 1950s, government scientists reported the connection between cigarette smoking and cancer. In 1964, the annual report by the Surgeon General (launched by Dr. Luther Terry) kept adding to the evidence of diseases from this highly promoted tobacco industry killer. Philip Morris Co., R.J. Reynolds and others kept promoting, denying, deceiving and regularly luring youngsters with free samples near schools. Over 400,000 annual deaths in the U.S. are attributed to smoking-related diseases.

When Congress, the media, and the public health groups started banging the drums in the 1980s, Big Tobacco was put on the defensive year after year. The number of daily smokers declined to under 15% from a high of 42% in 1964. Non-smokers more aggressively demanded smoke-free places and helped mightily to turn the tide. Who remembers the handful of tobacco-use fighters for their courageous and prescient advocacy?

Deadly Lag Time.

Lag time is another phrase for the "democracy gap." It is the space between what most of the people want and need, and what those same passive people suffer and tolerate.

The same "lag time" bleeds people economically. The federal minimum wage is still frozen by Congress at $7.25 per hour. Many millions of workers are between that number and $15 per hour.

Prof. Malcolm Sparrow of Harvard has led the way in highlighting the many billing frauds in the health care industry that totals $350 *billion* or more this year alone. His detailed warnings and his classic book, *License to Steal: Why Fraud Plagues America's Health Care System*, came out years ago in 1996. Still, a corporate Congress does nothing. The Biden Administration does not ask for necessary money for this area of enforcement, even though $1billion would save over $15 billion from fraudulent billing.

Jake Lewis and Jonathan Brown wrote and spoke about the damaging influence of the Federal Reserve and its Big Bank patrons back in the 60s and 70s. The lag time became worse, especially under Fed Chairman Jerome Powell who studies show has made the super-rich and corporate giants soaked in unearned wealth more rich while expanding the impact of gross inequality against the masses. (See the op-ed by Karen Petrou in the *New York Times*, July 12, 2021).

New Time Lags are underway. We have been forewarned about Medicare [Dis]Advantage, yet its corporate deceivers continue to devour traditional Medicare (controlling over 40% of Medicare beneficiaries).

Technology seers are warning against the terrible effects on younger people, including children, who will become addicted to Facebook's rollout of the Oculus or augmented reality goggles. Avaricious Zuckerberg continues to expand his dangerous monopolistic empire.

All those *who told us so* are largely forgotten, uncelebrated and, if they are still active, hardly getting their calls returned. Is there a more abject sign of a decaying democracy?

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