

The U.S. Health Care System - Values and Priorities

By [Brian McAfee](#)

Global Research, September 06, 2009

6 September 2009

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

The current battles over the American health-care system are indicative of a wider philosophical and social divide. What is at stake and what is the desired outcome of each side? To answer such an enquiry, we must first look at the current health-care system as it exists in the United States.

The World Health Organization ranks U.S. healthcare well below most of Europe, Canada and Japan. France and Italy rank at number one and two while the U.S. is in the thirty-seventh slot. Most of the countries that rank above the U.S. have some form of socialized medicine. Japan, which ranks tenth on the WHO list, is at number one in life expectancy with 74.5 years being the average while the U.S. is twenty-fourth in life expectancy, again well below much of Europe, Canada and Australia as well.

An oft repeated declaration is that the U.S. has the best healthcare in the world. It is, also, stated that people across the globe come to the U.S. for medical treatments, such as the King of Jordan, who recently went to the Mayo Clinic for surgery. This outcomes happens when people can afford the high costs for travel and care. Likewise, U.S. citizens do the same, but in a reverse sort of fashion.

For example, Richard DeVos, co-founder of AMWAY and a staunch Republican, went to Great Britain for a heart transplant and talk show host Charlie Rose went to France for heart surgery. These sorts of options, of course, do not exist for most Americans and, certainly, very few choices exist at all for the U.S. citizens who cannot afford healthcare coverage altogether.

This in mind, the disturbances and displays of “righteous indignation” at town hall meetings need a closer look. News reports indicate that many of the people disrupting the gatherings of specific Democratic Congressional representatives were largely staged by combinations of HMO employees bussed to the town halls for the purpose of creating distortion of the truth and troubled “FOX NEWS” zealots who believe capitalism and business interests should come before people’s health.

On account, this entire bunch delivered much misinformation and lies about Obama’s health-care plans, swayed lots of opinion polls, as well as showed a lack of knowledge about the benefits of universal health care delivery. Indeed, the right-wingers repeatedly compared Obama’s proposed changes to Nazism, which was especially ridiculous.

The Nazi comparisons are generally a bad idea for public discourse. However, there is an area that somewhat fits. During the Nazi era, particular businesses were given greater privilege and leeway over the well being of people and their rights with the most well known of these being I. G. Farben and Krupp. It was a clear cut idea and system where profit (and,

of course, power) took precedence over people's needs. Like a boomerang, the Nazi comparison notion comes home to roost, but not quite in the way intended by the neocon crowd... Well, you get the idea.

In a recent interview with Dr. James Jackson, a well known Muskegon physician and community activist, he stated that the problem in America's healthcare is that "it is based on capitalism, it puts people second and money first". When asked if HMOs had a legitimate place in American healthcare he said "absolutely not".

About Obama's potential health care plans, Dr Jackson, further, said that it has some problems. Specifically he mentioned that "if it does not include single payer, it will continue the same problems that we currently have".

In the ongoing battle for truth, justice and values, people should always be valued BEFORE and ABOVE lavish profits. If this orientation cannot be the foundation for human care, regardless of the form that the care takes, there is certainly much more that is wrong in the U.S.A. than just healthcare.

At the following links are located data concerning the World Health Organization's assessment of many nations' health care systems and life expectancies: The World Health Organization's ranking of the world's health ... (<http://www.photius.com/rankings/healthranks.html>) and Healthy Life Expectancy By Country (http://www.photius.com/rankings/healthy_life_table2.html). When the U.S. is compared with and contrasted to other countries, its relative greatness in the broader scheme certainly comes into question. For this reason, American priorities must be carefully evaluated and, without screaming matches at town meetings, reset.

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