

MYTH by Dr. Henry Kahn, Physicians for a National Health Program, Georgia

The doctors of this country will never go along with so much government involvement in health care. They'll all quit, and our health care will be worse off than before.

BUST!

It isn't the government that irritates most doctors. US doctors in private practice are especially unhappy about how they are treated by the commercial health insurance companies – large and small. In trying to help their patients who have job-related health insurance the private doctors face an unpredictable patchwork of restricted choices and denied payments. They face punishment or exclusion from insurance plans if they advocate too strongly for things their patients need. The doctors know also that their patients must face large deductibles and ever-increasing co-payments while the insurance companies typically keep about 20% of the premium dollars. And doctors' offices, just like the hospitals, must employ lots of staff to negotiate permission for care, process the bills, and go after late payments.

Many who work in health care now feel that our "market-based" financing of US health care has become much too expensive and inefficient. Increasing numbers of physicians prefer salaried work in organizations like the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the military, and health systems sponsored by local governments. Among doctors surveyed in 2007 a majority favored changing the health care financing system. Many of them – especially those providing primary care and mental health services – expressed their support for universal, single-payer national health insurance. Even some of the major insurance companies, according to a health-policy writer for *Forbes Magazine*, may soon be running away from the market-based model for financing health care.

Sources:

Robert Kuttner. Market-based failure -- A second opinion on U.S. health care costs. *The New England Journal of Medicine* 2008; 358: 549-51.

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Physicians for a National Health Program (see www.pnhp.org)
