**Health Care**

**For a third time, the U. S. Supreme Court has saved President Obama’s landmark health-care law “from Republican attempts to dismantle and destroy it,” said Matt Ford in NewRepublic.com. In a 7-2 ruling last week, the justices rejected a lawsuit from 18 Republican-controlled states arguing that because Congress in 2017 reduced the tax penalty for not buying health insurance to $0, the entire Affordable Care Act should be struck down. The states could not show the ACA injured them, the court ruled, so they had no standing to sue. The ACA now provides insurance to 31 million people, and more than 70 percent of Americans – including 67 percent of Republicans – support the ACA’s most popular provisions, such as guaranteeing that insurers can’t discriminate against those with pre-existing conditions. The justices have made it clear: “The ACA is here to stay.” *(The Week magazine, July 2, 2021)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*America spent $2.6 trillion on health care last year. But a third of that spending -- $750 billion – was squandered on unnecessary treatments and tests, Byzantine paperwork, fraud, and other inefficiencies, according to a new analysis by the Institute of Medicine. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 21, 2012)***

**Our health-care system has a fundamental flaw: It's far too expensive. Americans spend $3.3 trillion a year on health care, which is 50 percent to 100 percent higher per capita than in other developed nations. For our money, we get some of the world's most sophisticated treatment of cancer, heart disease, and other serious illnesses. But overall, U. S. health care is relatively mediocre, producing shorter life expectancy, higher infant mortality, and worse health overall than the systems in such countries as the U.K., Switzerland, Canada, Australia, and Sweden. *(William Falk, in The Week magazine, March 24, 2017)***

**Last year, Americans spent $2.6 trillion on health care, slightly more than the French spent on everything – education, defense, health care, food, housing, and more – making U.S. health-care spending alone equivalent to the fifth largest economy in the world. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 11, 2011)***

**The share of Americans without health insurance fell to 11.9 percent in the first three months of 2015, down 5.2 percentage points since Obamacare went into effect. *(Gallup.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 24, 2015)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*The average bill for a patient hospitalized for Covid-19 is $98,139, a new study by the nonprofit Fair Health has found. For cases requiring a ventilator or a stay in an intensive-care unit, the average bill was $317,810. *(San Francisco Chronicle, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 8, 2021)***

**Why we aren’t killing our CEOs: Canada can only watch in horror as America treats the assassin of a health-insurance executive “as a modern folk hero,” said John Semley. When United Health Care CEO Brian Thompson was killed last week on the streets of Manhattan, many Americans responded with “a weird mix of gallows humor and more radical, sharpen-the guillotines menace.” It seemed as if every family had a tale of an exorbitant medical bill denied, whether by that particular company or another. I know this firsthand, because I moved to the U.S. a few years ago, and I, too, have encountered its “byzantine, baffling, and maddening” health-care system. As A Canadian raised on our national single-payer system, I’d never even taken my debit card to the doctor’s office. “I was blissfully unaware of stuff like medical co-pays, premiums, exclusions, and deductibles.” And I’d never had to pore over a list of different plans with varying costs during an open-enrollment window, wondering how sick or injured I could afford to get in the coming year. The American system “produces an ambient, low-level stress” even for those who have so-called good insurance. Canadians should take this moment to appreciate what we have: a health system that “binds the social fabric.” When everyone gets the same excellent care, equality of all citizens is enshrined. That is a national good, and it’s “definitely worth protecting.” *(The Week magazine, December 20, 2024)***

**The percentage of U.S. companies that offer their employees health insurance has declined from 66 percent to 57 percent in the last decade. That trend is expected to continue as the Affordable Care Act promotes insurance outside employment. *(The National Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 13, 2013)***

**It's no surprise that constant stress can make people sick, and now a team of researchers has figured out how. A study focused on 119 men and women who were taking care of spouses with dementia. The health of the caregivers was compared with that of 106 people of similar ages who were not living under the stress of constant care giving. Blood tests showed that a chemical called Interleukin-6 sharply increased in the blood of the stressed caregivers compared with blood of the others in the test. Previous studies have associated IL-6 with several diseases, including heart disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, type-2 diabetes and certain cancers. The study also found the increase in IL-6 can linger in caregivers for as long as three years after a caregiver had ceased that role because of the spouse's death. Of the test group, 78 spouses died during the survey. “This really makes a link to why chronic stress can actually kill people,” said Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, professor of psychology and psychiatry at Ohio State University. She explained that people under stress tend to do things that can increase their levels of IL-6. For example, they may smoke or overeat; smoking raises IL-6 levels, and the chemical is secreted by fat cells. Stressed people also may not get enough exercise or sleep, she added. Exercise reduces IL-6 and normal sleep helps regulate levels of the chemical, she said. It clearly points to the need to control stress better, she said. *(Associated Press, as printed in Rocky Mountain News, July 1, 2003)***

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**The average cost of health care for an American family of four insured through an employer is now $19,393 – up 7.3 percent since last year. *(CNNMoney.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 27, 2011)***

**The high cost of health care is enough to make you sick. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Confronted by two doctors and an HMO manager at the Pearly Gates, St. Peter asked them to identify and explain themselves. The first doctor stepped forward. “I was a pediatric spine surgeon and helped children overcome deformities!” “You may enter,” St. Peter said. The second doctor stepped up. “I was a psychiatrist and helped people find peace?” St. Peter ushered him through the gates. The HMO manager stepped forward. “As an HMO manager, I helped people get cost-effective health care!” St. Peter waved him forward, but stopped him right as he got to the gates. “You may stay for three days. After that, you’re out of here.” (Andy Chapp, The Funnies)**

**The racial limits of empathy: Empathy, a new study finds, is skin-deep. When people see someone else experiencing pain, they subtly respond as if they, too, have been harmed – a phenomenon called pain empathy. But Italian scientists have found that pain empathy is greatly diminished if the two people belong to different races. In the study, two groups of subjects – one of African descent, the other, Italian – were asked to watch brief videos in which a hand was pricked by a needle. One video showed a white hand being stuck; the other, a black hand. When subjects saw a hand being pricked, they registered a sympathetic pain reaction in sensors placed on their hands – but only if the hand they watched belonged to someone of their own race. Subjects who’d expressed more prejudice in a questionnaire also showed less empathy toward opposite-race hands they saw in the videos. Intriguingly, both whites and blacks reacted empathetically when they saw a purple hand being pricked. “This is quite important, because it suggests that humans tend to empathize by default unless prejudice is at play,” study author Salvatore Aglioti tells CNN.com. Although empathy in the real world is more complex, says co-author Allesio Avenanti, the findings raise the possibility that racial differences might unconsciously hinder the ability of doctors to empathize with some of their patients, “and may contribute to the causes of racial disparities in health care.” (The Week magazine, June 18, 2010)**

**A study from HR consultancy Aon Hewitt has found that the average employer-paid health care premium will jump almost 6 percent next year, to $11,304 per employee. Workers on average will pay another $2,487 in out-of-pocket costs, an increase of more than 8 percent from 2014. (Forbes.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 28, 2014)**

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**If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it’s free. (P. J. O’Rourke, from a speech)**

**Almost half of working-age Americans skipped necessary medical care last year because it was too expensive. Most of those 80 million people were uninsured or underinsured, but 28 percent with good insurance still did without treatment because of cost. (CNN.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 10, 2013)**

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**Johnson & Johnson, the maker of products such as Band-Aids and baby shampoo, once decided to start selling medical technologies. To move into these new areas, J & J had to change from a corporate bureaucracy to a decentralized management structure. This new structure would ensure the flexibility needed in the health care field. The change caused many J & J executives to leave because they couldn't adjust to the loss of autonomy. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business,, p. 48)**

**Dr. C. Norman Shealy delivered the keynote address at the Unity Healing Symposium at Unity Village in October 1989. He explained that the health of Americans has not improved over the years, even though funding for health care has tripled. *(Christopher Ian Chenoweth, Unity Minister, in Unity magazine)***

**Speaker: As you've just shown, laughter can be a pretty strong medicine for dealing with cancer." Participant: "If laughter is good medicine, they I'm in great shape ... because my HMO is a joke." (Tom Batiuk, in Funky Winkerbean comic strip)**

**Overheard: “Now I know health care really has become a major concern for everyone. The other day, I saw a boy and a girl playing doctor. She asked for his Blue Cross card!” (Joe Hobby, in Reader's Digest)**

**A London doctor prescribed for Robinson, who was overweight, a drastic pill to be taken before retiring on six successive nights. The first night after taking the pill, Robinson dreamed that he was shipwrecked on a South Sea island with a beautiful maiden. He chased her all over the island and woke up in a sweat when he couldn't catch her. The marathon continued for six nights until he had lost 25 pounds. A friend, Brown, who was also rather portly, commented on his slim, healthy look, heard the story and said, "I'll have to see the doctor myself." But, after taking his first pill, Brown had a different dream. He landed on the island, all right, but there was no beautiful maiden for him. Instead, a highly decorated mob of savages pursued him ruthlessly for six nights. He, too, lost 25 pounds. Brown decided to go back to the doctor to inquire why his friend Robinson had lost as much weight, but apparently had had a far more enjoyable time in his dreams. "Mr. Robinson," said the doctor loftily, "is a private patient. You, Mr. Brown, are a National Health Service patient." *(K. W. in Courier, England, as it appeared in Reader's Digest, May, 1976 issue, on page 116)***

**The real objection to Obamacare: Remember all those dire conservative predictions about Obamacare? asked Jonathan Chait. They're failing to come true. Take the claim that only previously insured people were signing up. A new Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that 57 percent of enrollees previously had no insurance. Meanwhile, the uninsured rate nationally has plunged 25 percent. The horror stories about the "rate shock" from soaring premiums? Also bogus. In reality, the average private plan purchased on the exchanges costs just $82 a month. Most people with modest incomes are seeing their individual premiums go down, not up. As additional insurers jumps into the exchanges, they're putting downward pressure on premiums. Now that it's impossible to deny that millions of Americans are getting affordable health insurance for the first time, conservatives are admitting what really bugs them: "Other people's money will pay for it." It's redistribution! Never mind that "other people's money" -- including a fat tax deduction -- also subsidizes employer-provided insurance. All along, conservatives hated Obamacare not because it couldn't work -- but because they fear it would. (The Week magazine, July 4, 2014)**

**Blondie: “Our health care package has lots of new options. One plan costs less, another plan has better coverage, and another has high deductions for doctors out of the network.” Wife: “What are we going to do?” Blondie: “Stay healthy!” (Dean Young & John Marshall, in Blondie comic strip)**

**Frank says to Ernest: “I hope they pass it (National Health Plan) soon, because all the speeches about it are making me sick!” (Bob Thaves, in Frank & Ernest comic strip)**

**32% of Americans say they prefer Democrats' health-care plan, while just 18% think Republicans have a better plan, down from 24% in March. (Reuters.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 2, 2014)**

**The percentage of private companies offering health-care coverage to employees has dropped steadily since 2000, and in 2011, only 52 percent of private-sector workers had health coverage through their employers. The average premium for a single employee doubled during that time. (Bloomberg.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 26, 2013)**

**The reason health care is so costly: Most people seem to regard health insurance companies as the main villain in the system,” said Noah Smith, but it’s doctors, nurses, technicians, and hospitals that are “charging you an arm and a leg for your health care.” The recent assassination of United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompsoin has focused national attention on the health-care insurance industry, but much of the criticism is based on a fundamedntal misunderstanding. The health insurers charge modest fees and maintain relatively low profit margins of 2 percent to 6 percent – less than half the average of companies in the S & P 500, The real problem is that per capita, our health-care spending is nearly double that of comparable countries. Our doctors make more than double the salaries of most European physicians. Executives at even “nonprofit” hopspitals are paid millions each year. The tests, procedures, and prescriptions you get cost far more than they do in other countries.; “The smiling doctor” who treats you “without ever asking you for money knows full well you’re going to end up having to wrangle with the insurance company for the cost of all those services. Insurance companies “are simply hired to play the bad guy.” *(The Week magazine, December 27, 2024/January 3, 2025)***

**Since 2001, the health-care sector grew by 1.7 million jobs, while the number of private-sector jobs outside of health care has not changed. (BusinessWeek, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 29, 2006)**

**About 25 percent of seniors receiving Medicare spend all their savings and must sell their homes and other assets to pay for non-covered medical care in the last five years of life, a new study found. Nursing care accounts for much of that cost. (The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 21, 2012)**

**Pioneering U.S. physicist Leon Lederman sold his Nobel Prize medal for $765,000 in 2015 to pay medical bills, it was revealed following his death last week. A day in a U.S. hospital costs an average of $5,220, compared with $765 in Australia or $424 in Spain. (Vox.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 19, 2018)**

**Just 1 percent of Americans accounted for 22 percent of $1.26 trillion spent on health care in 2009, according to a new federal study. That’s about $90,000 per person. The most expensive 5 percent of the population accounted for 50 percent of health–care costs. (USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 27, 2012)**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Stress costs the U.S. economy an estimated $300 billion a year in absenteeism, lost productivity, and increased health-care costs. *(Marketwatch.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 9, 2006)***

**Employee: "The stress my boss puts me under is killing me. I have migraines, my blood pressure is going through the roof, I can't sleep at night, I just found out I have an ulcer, and as long as I stay in this job, the only question is whether I'll have a stroke or a heart attack." Friend: "So, why don't you quit?" Employee: "I have a great health plan." (Richard Jerome, in The Sciences**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Uninsured Americans will spend about $30 billion out of pocket this year on health care, says a new Urban Institute study. An additional $56 billion in costs will be covered by other sources, primarily the federal government and state agencies. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 5, 2008)***

**In 2010, the United States spent $7,285 per capita on health care. The United States spent more on health care in 2009 than the total economic output of the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and Brazil. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, p. 55)***

**For a long time, even admirers of Wal-Mart had to admit that “the company was a bit evil,” said Hank Gilman. It ignored overtime rules, “locked workers in stores overnight,” and so hated unions that it would close a store rather than let in organizers. But we no longer hear so many stories about Wal-Mart’s callousness and depravity. What has changed? The financial crisis, for one thing. The massive retailer’s low prices have won over recession-battered consumers at the same time that Wall Streeters have amply proved that “they could be much more evil that Wal-Mart could ever be.” Wal-Mart even seems to be getting better press, which it has earned. Former CEO Lee Scott, who stepped down earlier this year, “came up with more health-care coverage for his workers, emerged as a spokesman of sorts for covering the uninsured, and became an evangelist for the green movement.” Anti-business types may soon wonder where all the Wal-Mart haters went. Or they might be too busy bashing Wall Street to notice. *(The Week magazine, November 6, 2009)***

**More Republicans than Democrats are taking advantage of an Obamacare provision that allows young adults to stay on their parents' health-care plans until age 26. A study by the Commonwealth Fund found that 63 percent of Republicans ages 19 to 25 remained on their parents' health-care plans this year, compared with 45 percent of young Democrats. (WashingtonPost.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 6, 2013)**

**Frank says to Ernest: "This says that in the last year of your life, 98 percent of your money will go for medical care." Ernest: "So that's why you can't take it with you!" *(Bob Thaves, in Frank & Ernest comic strip)***

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