

Universal Healthcare

Beth Martin

HI-225 Healthcare Reimbursement Methodologies

Elizabeth Sheridan

June 21, 2020

Universal health care refers to a nation system that would provide medical benefits and services to all citizens, regardless of ability to pay. When looking at universal healthcare it is a

system that the government has administered it entirely, this is done through a combination of state and private participants. This is also achieved through community funds and employer supported programs. When a government funds healthcare fully it is considered a single-payer health insurance. This type of single-payer healthcare system is in place in seventeen countries as of 2019, these include Canada, Norway, and Japan. Looking at single-payer systems the government administers insurance coverage and nongovernmental organizations such as private companies provide treatment and care. There are some healthcare systems that require the purchasing of private insurance that forces people to purchase insurance whether or not that they can afford it.

When looking at the single-payer system and Medicare for All it becomes very confusing for Americans when presidential candidates are discussing healthcare reforms. Single-payer system has a single entity that pays for healthcare services, this is typically a government. Healthcare facilitates and healthcare professionals are paid and managed by the government. When looking at Medicare in the United States the government pays the bills and the delivery system is mainly private. Medicare for All began in the late 1980s, which would extend coverage for all citizens, this would create an entirely new and generous program for all Americans. The main concern for Americans, who already have coverage, is what the cost of healthcare coverage will be. A survey of voters in Iowa, South Carolina, and New Hampshire showed that the main concern was high out-of-pocket cost and not the insurance coverage.

The cost of medical services in the United States is higher than other industrialized nations. The United States spent 25% more per person than Switzerland, the next highest spending country in 2016. The rate that Americans pay has nothing to do with the amount of services that they use. It is all about the high costs of services that they receive. Research shows

that U.S. policy makers should put more focus on the actual cost of services in the private sectors due to the fact that services have increased in the past fifteen years. Drug companies and health insurance are the highest in healthcare spending. Sanders is quoted as saying “ The giant pharmaceutical and health insurance lobbies have spent billions of dollars over the past decades to ensure that their profits come before the health of the American people, we must defend them, together” on his presidential campaign website. (Rovner 2020)

When looking at the United States healthcare coverage is due to the fact that it is a subject of concern and how to make sure coverage is attainable at an affordable rate for all citizens. Healthcare is a major subject among voters of the United States and presidential debates. In the 2020 presidential election there were a number of candidates for the Democratic party that has universal healthcare on their platform of promises. The Republican Party which included Donald Trump, stated that universal healthcare is economically implausible and threatening to individual choice. The debate among Democrats is that some are in favor of Medicare for All and others feel that a less sweeping change would be best. They word it as public opinion and it would allow individuals to purchase a government health care plan and not make it a requirement. (Rovner 2020)

There are many pros and cons of universal healthcare in the United States. The pros include that universal health care would endure that healthcare would be available for the entire population. This would improve health outcomes regardless of gender, race, age, employment status, or geographic location. The cost of health care would be reduced for families, businesses and the government, even though the beginning costs of implementation would be high. Reforms in the private insurance industry would be a much needed aspect of healthcare. When looking at the cons you have to understand that healthy individuals would have to be responsible for the

medical needs of unhealthy individuals. The implementation of universal healthcare will cost trillions of dollars that would put the country further into debt. Universal health care allows the government access into the lives, healthcare and health insurance companies, and employers' rights to choose what coverage they'd like to offer employees.

Presidential candidates have been campaigning for healthcare through the years, Bill Clinton campaigned for healthcare reform in 1992, upon being elected to the presidency Clinton started the Task Force on National Health Care Reform with Hillary Rodham Clinton by his side as chair. The Health Security Act of 1993 was referred to as "Hillarycare" this plan would force all individuals to have health insurance and employers with more than 5,000 employees to provide healthcare insurance coverage. This bill was opposed by policymakers, insurance companies, and physician groups and was not passed. In 1993 Jim McDermott introduced the American Health Security Act, this would create a single-payer system, this bill was introduced multiple times at each session of Congress until he chose not to seek reelection in 2016. In 2003 John Conyers Jr. introduced the United States National Health Insurance Act which is a single-payer health care system, with no response from the House floor. Even though Conyers played the bill before Congress multiple times he also chose to resign from office in 2017.

Massachusetts state legislators did have some success in expanding health care. Their system, which is called "Romneycare," mandated that if health insurance was not obtained individuals would be fined. Due to the fact that all individuals were required to carry coverage it in turn drove the price of health insurance down to a rate that was obtainable for all. The price being at a reasonable rate made it so Massachusetts has the highest coverage rate, 98%, which is higher than any other state.

In 2008 once again healthcare was center stage on the presidential campaign. The Barack Obama campaign was centered around the Massachusetts model. After winning the election he focused on the expansion of health care coverage, which led to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. With the ACA in place the uninsured went from 16% in 2010 to 8.6% by the end of Obama's presidency. There did seem to be some issues such as premium increase for individuals that fell under the low income and older categories. The Vermont senator Bernie Sanders who in 2016 while running for president also campaigned for health care reform and introduced the Medicare for All Act of 2017,, which would access government health coverage to all individuals. The cost of Sanders' plan was projected to cost \$32.6 trillion over the span of ten years, from a study in 2018 at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Sanders stated that there would be a savings of \$2 trillion without implementing the reform. In 2017-2018 there were eight health care bills during this time. In July 2018 the House of Representatives formed the Medicare for All Caucus with over seventy Democratic members who helped with information on health care reform. The one problem with single-payer would eliminate or decrease the need for private insurance and according to some Democrats feel that it could decrease the quality of service provided to patients.

When looking at the problems involved with having no health care insurance 45,000 Americans die each year. Universal health care is seen as a way to avoid the amount of deaths due to the fact that everyone would be covered and access to health care services would be accessible to those who otherwise would have no means of obtaining coverage. Preventative care and basic care would improve overall health for patients. As in other countries with universal healthcare models it is found that there is a decreased quality of care, this is because the wait time for care is higher. England's National Health Service in 2018 removed life support of a

toddler against the parents wishes, the single-payer system has the power to make decisions and this has become a strong debate regarding this type of system.

The United States has suggested that medical services are dependent on a multitude of factors such as where a patient lives, employment, race, gender, and ethnicity. When looking at the Medicare system it only provides coverage to those 65 and older or those with disabilities or end stage renal disease, if expanded it would make coverage more impartial. The concern of universal health care is also seen by many critics as a costly system that would in the long run increase the overall costs. On the other hand many feel that if patients take advantage of preventative services it would reduce the need for expensive treatments due to the fact that health issues would be detected earlier. The New England Journal of Medicine did a study in 2003 stating that 31 percent of United States health spending was towards administrative costs and found to be unnecessary, if reducing these costs it would allow resources that are limited to be used more effectively.

There have been stories where individuals have traveled back to their countries of origin for health care treatment due to the fact that the cost of care in the United States is at such a higher rate. “Every developed country in the world is committed to universal health care except the United States.” (Scott 2020) It is consensus that everyone should have access to healthcare and that the government should have a part in making sure that individuals are covered. 85 percent of the Democratic voters feel that the government has a responsibility to make sure that healthcare is accessible to all individuals and there is a small percentage of Republicans, 27 percent, are in agreement. Princeton economist Uwe Reinhardt is quoted as saying “Canada and virtually all European and Asian developed nations have reached, decades ago, a political consensus to treat health care as a social good. By contrast, we in the United States have never

reached a politically dominant consensus on the issue.” When the topic of healthcare in the United States is brought up in other countries it is believed that the cost individuals have to pay for care should never happen. When looking at single-payer in Taiwan, a mix of public and private insurance in Australia, and private coverage in Netherlands all individuals have insurance and the cost to patients was at a much lower rate. Even though everyone had coverage there are still issues with these systems. Taiwan does not have adequate supply of healthcare, the rural parts of the country lacks specialty care which leads to physicians being overwhelmed. Australia's system allows for more choices of medical care for the patients and physicians. Another downfall is that public hospitals have a longer wait time than private hospitals. The patients that have lower income seem to have decreased coverage and longer wait times than those that are in a higher income bracket.

Maryland tried to use a model similar to universal healthcare to improve the care for patients by having hospitals put their focus on patients instead of the number of patient beds filled. This leads to the fact that the United State has 51 different systems and the variation of programs is vast. There is a for those of different races and economical levels, and it seems that if you are at a higher economical level and can afford coverage than the United States health system is without issues. Having a single-payer system could be a good choice for the United States if the government could agree on what is best for the country and its citizens as a whole. (Scott 2020) Having the government cover all aspects of coverage except for supplemental care which would be by private insurance was the goal of Sanders and Pramila Jayapal. (Uhrmacher, Schaul, Firozi, Stein 2020)

In 2020 healthcare reform is still a hot topic and even though all Democrats running for president are campaigning for affordable and quality universal healthcare and will insure 27

million Americans they can not come to an agreement on how to get to this point. Moderate candidates feel that the Affordable Care Act would be a better option with an expansion of the plan. There is the fear that with the implementation of a single-payer system middle-class Americans would be taxed at a rate they could not afford. Joe Biden would like to expand the Affordable Care Act and create an option Medicare that would be available to the public. This plan would increase tax credits so that regardless of income of a family they wouldn't spend more than 8.5% of their income for insurance on the individual marketplace. His plan would also help 4.9 million Americans who do not have access to Medicaid, because more than a dozen states have refused to expand low-income programs. Sanders' proposal for a wealthy tax could aid in implementing Medicare for All by using the money to pay for it. Even though the taxes of middle-class Americans would increase, Sanders believes that there would be savings due to not having to pay for premiums, copays and deductibles. The tax break would come with the first \$29,000 of an individual's income being exempt, the other incentive is that Americans would not pay more than \$200.00 per year for the cost of prescriptions. (Hagen 2019)

It is obvious that every four years during the presidential elections Americans are going to be bombarded with talk and promises of better healthcare coverage whether it be single-payer or Medicare for All. With other countries that have such systems in place there is one common factor, the government and individuals have agreed on which system meets their needs. The United States is not even close to such an agreement which until they are healthcare will continue to be a hot topic and Americans will be in constant flux on whether they can or can not afford to have adequate coverage.

References

Donaldson, Cam. The Conversation. *The 2020 election is now a key moment if public universal healthcare is ever to happen in the US*. April 16, 2020.

Hagen, Lisa. A WORLD REPORT U.S .NEWS. *Where the 2020 Candidates Stand on Health Care and Medicare*. October 11, 2019

Rovner, Julie. Npr. *U.S. Elections 2020: Understanding What's At Stake For Health Care*. January 29, 2020

Scott, Dylan. Vox. *9 things Americans need to learn from the rest of the world's health care systems*. January 29, 2020.

Uhrmacher, Kevin, Schaul, Kevin, Firozi, Paulina, and Stein, Jeff. The Washington Post. *Where 2020 Democrats stand on Health care*. April 8, 2020.