

Event Summary

Healthcare in America: What's Next?

Monday, October 2, 2017



[Minuteman Indivisible \(MI\)](#) co-sponsored this forum on Single Payer Healthcare (Medicare for All) in conjunction with [Harvard Medicine Indivisible \(HMI\)](#)

The forum, which was held at First Parish Church in Lexington, featured three distinguished healthcare specialists:



[Alan Meyers, M.D.](#) Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics at Boston University, and a founding member of Physicians for a National Health Program.



[William Hsiao, Ph.D.](#) Professor of Economics, Harvard School of Public Health. Leading global expert in universal health insurance



[Don Berwick, MD, MPP, FRCP](#) President Emeritus and Senior Fellow, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, is also former Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The three panelists shared statistics and vignettes on the current state of healthcare in the US, comparisons—or rather contrasts—with other developed countries.

Dr. Meyers presented some startling statistics about healthcare today:

- 20 million people have no insurance
- 28 million are underinsured
- 60% of people who were forced to declare bankruptcy had insurance
- The US is #1 among developed countries yet paying 2½ times what other countries pay for healthcare based on GDP

Why? – The administrative cost of the current multi-payer system. His contention: everyone needs to have ready access to comprehensive care without financial barriers.

Dr. Hsiao focused on economic issues including access, cost escalation, and the uneven quality of healthcare services. He presented his estimates of savings if the US had single payer insurance:

- Administrative savings - \$300-400 billion
- Reduction in abuse and fraudulent claims - \$180 billion
- Reduced cost of prescription drugs - \$180 billion
- Lower costs for end of life heroic measures \$80-100 billion

There are additional costs of \$350-450 billion (e.g., for new systems and worker dislocation), but the net savings would be roughly \$300-400 billion, 50% of current costs!

Dr. Berwick emphasized that taking care of our fellow humans is in our DNA, and that universal healthcare should be part of a nation where people help each other. The recent Replace & Repeal bills in the House and Senate were nasty bills:

- Half of the Essential Benefits of the ACA were removed
- HHS is drastically interfering with ACA enrollment
- The bills push costs to the states, and ultimately to the individual.

He stressed that we have to get back to the moral values that universal healthcare serves.

Their presentations made a strong case for moving away from our multi-payer, multi-provider system to one of universal healthcare. They called on Indivisible groups to step

up to claiming the moral high ground and provided a number of steps that we might take, including lobbying for bills such as Senator Sanders' new bill Medicare-For-All Act of 2017 (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1804>) and MA S.619 An Act establishing Medicare for all in Massachusetts (<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/190/S619>) sponsored by Senator Jamie Eldridge, who also attended the forum.

After the panelists made their presentation, they addressed numerous questions from the audience.

