

Sicko Omits Critical Information on Government-Run Health Care Systems

In his recent movie *Sicko*, Director Michael Moore suggests that socialized forms of medicine practiced in other countries could provide solutions to issues involving access, affordability, and quality of care in America. However, insight provided by reports on the government-operated systems sited in Moore's movie raise questions about their actual effectiveness and bring to light the poor quality and rationing of care that often occurs.

A May 2004 poll found that 87 percent of Canada's business leaders would support seeking health care outside the government system if they had a pressing medical concern.¹ In 2005, the Canadian Supreme Court struck down a Quebec law banning private medical insurance stating that "...patients die as a result of waiting lists for public health care."² The Court also stated "waiting lists had become so long they violated patients' 'liberty, safety, and security' under the Quebec charter."³ In 2006, the total wait time for Canadians from referral by a general practitioner to treatment was 17.8 weeks.⁴ The median wait for an MRI across Canada was more than two months.⁵

In Great Britain, the government reported that after the "largest ever sustained funding increase in the history of the NHS (National Health System)" patients still wait up to three months for their first outpatient appointment and those needing an operation wait as long as six months.⁶ Research indicates British cancer patients have the worst survival rates in Europe, also lagging behind the United States due to the low uptake of new cancer treatments.⁷ Five-year cancer survival rates are 36 percent and 47 percent for men and women respectively in England.⁸ In the United States, five-year relative survival for cancer is 66 percent.⁹

In 2003, an estimated 13,000 French died when their government-run health care system collapsed during a record heat wave. According to CNN, "the government was criticized for failing to react fast enough to the crisis, during which hospitals were swamped with people, especially the elderly, suffering from dehydration and hyperthermia."

The National Post reports that in Cuba antibiotics are often only available on the black market, surgeons lack basic supplies and must re-use latex gloves, and patients buy their own sutures on the black market and provide bed sheets and food for extended hospital stays.¹⁰

While many support efforts to advance the national dialogue on health care reform, a recent CBS News/New York Times poll found that only 30 percent of Americans believe government would do a better job in providing health care coverage than private companies.

1-Pipes, Sally, "Miracle Cure: How To Solve America's Health Care Crisis and Why Canada Isn't the Answer," 2004

2-Clifford, Krauss, "Canada's Supreme Court Chips Away at National Health Care," New York Times, 9 June 2005

3-Esmail, Nadeem and M. Walker, "How Good is Canadian Health Care? 2005 Report." The Fraser Institute, 2005

4,5 -The Fraser Institute, "Waiting Your Turn: Hospital Waiting Lists in Canada," 2006

6-Rebuilding the NHS: Anew generation of health facilities, http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_075176

7-Annals of Oncology, Issue 17, April 2007, Supplement 3. See also Fleming, Nic, "Cancer survival rates worst in western Europe," The Daily Telegraph, 5 May 2007

8-Cancer Research UK, Cancer Survival in the European Union

9-American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures, 2007

10-Vincent, Isabel, "For Cubans, a bitter pill," National Post, July 7, 2004

Health Quiz

- In 2005, the Canadian Supreme Court struck down a Quebec law banning private medical insurance, in part, because of long waiting lists for patients.**
(a) True
(b) False
- In Great Britain, men diagnosed with prostate cancer are three times as likely to die than those in the United States**
(a) True
(b) False
- In Great Britain, women diagnosed with breast cancer are almost twice as likely to die as those in the United States.**
(a) True
(b) False
- According to a CBS New/New York Times poll, what percent of Americans are dissatisfied with the quality of health care in this country?**
(a) 57%
(b) 33%
(c) 21%
(d) 44%
- 87 percent of those surveyed in the CBS News/New York Times poll indicated their health coverage provided them access to good medical care.**
(a) True
(b) False

CBS News/New York Times Poll Says Overwhelming Majority of Americans Support Health Care Reform

A recent CBS News/New York Times Poll indicated that 90 percent of Americans believe the U.S. health care system is in need of major repairs. Although most Americans say they are satisfied with the quality of their own health care, including 41 percent who say they are very satisfied, 81 percent are dissatisfied with the cost of health care. Most in the poll believe the government can control costs and guarantee coverage for all but they are doubtful the government would do a better job of providing health care coverage than private companies now do. According to the survey, health care tied with jobs and the economy as the second most important issue facing the country, following the war in Iraq. Eighty-four percent of those surveyed favored expanding government programs to give insurance to all uninsured children, with many supporting additional taxes to do so. Seventy-seven percent believed that Americans should be allowed to purchase prescription drugs from Canada. You may review the complete poll at http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/CBSNews_polls/health_care.pdf.

Health Plans, LULAC and American Diabetes Association Announce Bilingual Diabetes Education Campaign

“Check Your Feet!” That’s the advice millions of Americans with diabetes are about to get in television, radio, and print public service announcements (PSAs) created by America’s Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) in partnership with the American Diabetes Association and LULAC.

Up to 85 percent of the 82,000 amputations associated with diabetes in U.S. each year could be prevented with proper foot care. There are 20.8 million children and adults in the United States, or 7 percent of the population, who have diabetes. More than 60 percent of non-traumatic lower-limb amputations occur in people with diabetes.

The campaign is part of a broad collaboration between AHIP and LULAC that will include an ongoing focus on diabetes prevention and treatment in the Hispanic community. Approximately 10 percent of all Latinos – more than two million individuals – have diabetes. The education message will publicize the fact that simple steps like having your doctor examine your feet on each visit can make a difference.

Living Near High-Traffic Roadways May Be Hazardous to Your Health

According to a study conducted by German researchers and reported in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, long-term exposure to air pollution from a nearby freeway or heavily trafficked street is associated with hardening of the arteries that could raise the risk of heart disease and stroke. The study included 4,494 adults age 45 to 74 years and was conducted in three large adjacent cities in the industrialized Ruhr area of Germany. The home address of those surveyed was used to estimate each person’s exposure to urban air pollution. Participants responded to questionnaires and interviews on personal risk factors such as diabetes, smoking and passive smoking and underwent laboratory tests and extensive clinical examinations. Participants were also tested to determine coronary artery calcification. The study found calcification was:

- 63 percent higher for those living within 160 feet of major traffic,
- 34 percent higher for those living within 160-328 feet of major traffic, and
- 8 percent higher for those living within 328-642 feet of major traffic.

Trivia answers: 1. a (True) 2. a (True) 3. a (True) 4. (a) 57% 5. a (True)

Birthdays

August

5 – Rep. Brandon Creighton
5 – Sen. Robert Duncan
7 – Rep. Kino Flores
10 – Rep. Frank Corte
10 – Sen. Troy Fraser
13 – Sen. John Whitmire
17 – Rep. Wayne Smith
18 – Lt Gov. David Dewhurst
19 – Rep. Mike Villarreal
19 – Rep. Bill Zedler
20 – Rep. Betty Brown
20 – Sen. Craig Estes
20 – Sen. Mike Jackson
21 – Rep. Dianne Delisi
24 – Rep. Kirk England
25 – Rep. Ana Hernandez
28 – Rep. Ellen Cohen
28 – Rep. Mark Homer