



ACTION ALERT

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN CARE ABOUT HEALTHCARE

Guest Contributor: Marilyn Clement

According to the World Health Organization, the United States spends the most on health care compared to any other country in the world, but only ranks 37th in the overall quality of health care it provides. The United States is the only industrialized country that does not provide universal health care. More than 44.3 million people living in the United States have no health insurance, and many millions are underinsured. A recent study by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine estimates that 18,000 25-64-year-olds in the United States die every year as a result of lack of coverage.¹

When Jesus walked the earth, he showed care for his brothers and sisters through his response to their pain and suffering. He healed the blind and the bleeding and he urged people to heal themselves and to care for each other. The Good Samaritan was the primary example of Jesus' message about health care - basically that the good man, the one who does the will of God, provides health care for everyone, even the stranger.

The United States is facing the same "Good Samaritan" dilemma. About one hundred million people are in the position of the wounded man by the side of the road, beaten and robbed by thieves and left to die. They are neglected by a health care system that is defined by greed.

The nation is about to enter into a great debate on one of the most significant moral issues of our time. The question in its simplest form is: "Will we continue to have a profit-driven system that provides hundreds of billions of dollars in wealth to the health care industrial complex -- the drug and insurance companies -- or will we provide a nonprofit system that covers everybody with that money?" The debate is over whether we should give more public and personal money to the insurance and drug companies or whether we should use that money for health care for all. It is a matter of priorities. United Methodist policy says "Yes" to Jesus' mandate that we move to a caring nonprofit system that uses our money to cover everybody, not for profits, but for a single-payer system that provides guaranteed quality health care for all.

"Under the current health care system, hundreds of billions of dollars a year are wasted by health care sellers on billing, fraud and administrative expenses. Studies show that savings from a single-payer system would be more than enough to provide universal coverage for the same amount that we are now paying."²

The good news is that we can have a quality health care system for every person in this country. And we can do it while spending no more money than we are now spending. It may be surprising to hear that about 1/3 of every dollar we now spend on the health care system goes into excess administrative costs, advertising and executive salaries. That comes to almost \$300 billion a year, which would cover all of the uninsured as well as the anxiously and barely insured and provide much better benefits for all of us.

With the money we are now spending we could do all of this if we moved to a single-payer system. It is good business to remove the unnecessary middle-man costs from this essential system. Our church agencies, our businesses and our nonprofit organizations would be able to provide more and better services if they didn't have the burden of financing health care for employees.



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK

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How did the Good Samaritan respond to the man at the side of the road? How will we respond to the uninsured and underinsured left at the side of the road today?



Act to move us toward a real national healthcare system for all:

• **Write to your Member of Congress:**

- Tell your Congress member that you want him/her to endorse H.R. 676, the only bill in Congress that calls for a non-profit single-payer national healthcare system that won't cost more money. Remind your Congressional member that the American people voted strongly for healthcare for all in the fall elections, and that we expect Congress to move forward on the promises they made during the campaign to work to heal the healthcare crisis in America.
- To find contact information for your member of Congress contact the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121

• **Visit your Member of Congress:**

- Take a diverse delegation including doctors and nurses, business leaders, workers, and members of your congregation to visit your Congressional members. Be sure your Congress member understands that this is something that must receive his/her attention now, not later after the next election.

• **Learn about the Older Women's League Healthcare Initiative:**

- The United Methodist Women's Division has endorsed the Older Women's League (OWL) healthcare initiative promoting their report *Mother's Day 2007: Give 'Em Health, Revisited: Medicare-For-All*. Contact OWL for a copy of this report on the status of healthcare for older women. Also learn more about OWL's postcard campaign to legislators. Contact OWL by telephone at (703) 812-7990 ext.21, by mail at OWL, 3300 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite218, Arlington, VA 22201 or through their website at www.owl-national.org
- You may also contact Julie Taylor, Executive Secretary for Children, Youth and Family Advocacy for the Women's Division at (202) 488-5660 for more information.

• **Read the Good Samaritan parable with new eyes:** Eyes that see it as a guide for the kind of 21st Century healthcare system we really need here and around the world, healthcare for every person.

• **Read *The Book of Resolutions 2004*, #282. U.S. Federal Single-Payer Health Insurance Program, pg. 704.**

• **For further information:**

- Contact Healthcare NOW at 1-800-453-1305 or visit their website at www.Healthcare-NOW.org
- Visit the Physicians for a National Health Plan website at www.pnhp.org

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¹ Nader, Ralf. *Health Care for All*. www.votenader.org

² Ibid.