

ObamaCare: Caring for Private Profits at its Best



It is not easy to criticize Obama Care. And the reason for that is not that it might be considered not to be p.c. (political correct) to criticize the main “reform” of a Democratic president, nor because the Tea party supporters criticized it already enough and we (leftists, progressives, socialists) don't want to sing along with reactionary brainless people like the Tea-bangers.

No, the main reason why it's hard to criticize Obama Care is because you hardly know where to start. The existing US healthcare system is sooo wrong in all its fundamentals already, in all of what it is based on, that it would take a book to sufficiently criticize it in general as well as Obama Care in particular as mainly just the intensifier of the existing system and its fundamental problems.

Now that ObamaCare is about to come into effect, there has been a lot of news coverage about it. And all of the news is bad.

The Real Bad News

The bad news about ObamaCare is not that the computer system isn't working right. And it is also not a matter of time (three years) which seemed to have been wasted in forming this new dysfunctional health care reform.

The real bad news is that the new healthcare system isn't working and can't be fixed, no matter how much more time is going to be spent on fixing “minor” problems like the internet exchange website or extending the existing insurance plans for some people. Even if the computer system would work and you could access the new insurance exchange platform (and you would be given more time to find something) you still wouldn't be able to get “affordable and universal healthcare”.

Because this it not what Obama Care is about.

Obama Care is about granting the private insurance companies and big private hospital chains the biggest profits ever.

Under the new law, millions of Americans are forced now to buy health insurance they can't afford (or they will have to pay a fine) even though they know they will never get the healthcare they need due to network restrictions, high deductibles etc.

Subsidies

Some patients will be able to get subsidies for their new insurance. But subsidies are not “free” either. They are paid for by the working class people in form of taxes (since we all know that the ruling class does hardly pay any taxes, so it's up to us again to pay). Not that there is anything wrong with using taxes to pay for health insurance. But, if the services are paid by the people then the people should actually be able to get some access to these services. But the old capitalist rule rules again: “Profits are privatized while debts are socialized.” Obama Care will give the insurance companies and privately owned hospital chains a chance to get more money, to accumulate higher profits than ever before while working class people will have to pay the bill. Working class people will have to pay for the increased profits of the private profiteers in the US healthcare system which will in no way become more affordable, accessible or efficient through Obama Care. Because Obama Care doesn't change the system at all. The US healthcare industry will stay as it was before – an almost entirely privately owned capitalist, only for profit functioning, enterprise.

Tax payers money should not be used for private profits. This money should indeed be used to help to treat patients instead of helping to fill up the bank accounts of the CEO's and owners of private hospital chains, health insurance companies and the pharma

industry.

Main Flaws

But, to give it a try, here are the main flaws of “Obama Care” (or ACA – the Affordable Care Act – which should actually be called AACA: “Affordable and Accessible Care Avoided Again”) summarized:

- 10 to 15 million US-Americans are getting cancellation notices right now and are losing their present healthcare coverage. After that they will be forced to look for a new one (a more expensive one). Obama is apologizing for this right now since he previously assured everybody that they could keep the insurance they have. Well, it turns out, they can't. I am not sure why Obama didn't know the details about his own “big” insurance reform.



- The reason why millions of people in the US are getting cancellation notices right now is that the new law requires the insurance companies to provide more services which hadn't been covered before, like treatment for mental illness, substance abuse and maternity. (In the US one out of 4 people suffers from mental illness or substance abuse and a lot of people are still getting pregnant in this country). In the past, patients could choose if they wanted to have these services in their private health insurance policies and if they want to pay the extra fee for that. Now they are forced to have it and pay for it.
- The only way to keep your existing healthcare plan (health insurance policy) is if it had been “grandfathered” – meaning you had it longer than three years already (when ACA was first introduced and decided on). But: most insurance companies were able to trick their

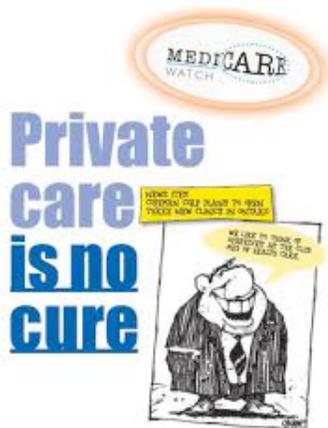
customers into making little changes in the last three years to their existing plans. So, now these plans are not protected as being grandfathered but considered to be new. All these insured people who dared to make little changes to their policies as “suggested” by their insurance companies got cancellation notices.

- And it is not surprising that the insurance companies did so because their representatives were the main ones taking part in the negotiations leading up to this new healthcare law. They knew and still do know what they are doing and how to get the biggest profits. Most Americans know what it means to deal with insurance companies. They take all your money and refuse to pay anything if asked for it. Obama Care hasn't change any of this.

- In general, the fact of having a more expensive health insurance doesn't mean anybody will actually get the services they need. There are a lot of different private insurance companies in the US and they create their own networks of providers with which they have contracts and to whom they can dictate what they pay them. They also decide where they operate and where they offer their services. If there are too many sick people in a particular area you will not find them offering their services...

- So millions of Americans will still have trouble finding a health insurance to cover them. The main positive thing of Obama Care was that now patients with a so-called “pre-existing condition” were “allowed” to to get health insurance (because before that the general rule in this country was : “If you really do need health insurance we will definitely not give it to you. We only insure the young and the healthy. Because otherwise it will disturb the amounts of profits we can make.”) For decades it was a given fact in the US that sick patients – patients who needed health insurance the most - had no chance to get it. Obama Care was supposed to change this. Well, it is not. Even though the new insurance law forces insurance companies to also except patients with pre-existing conditions, the law does not force these companies to offer their services in all parts of the US. So, right now, insurance companies are opting out, are stopping to offer health care in the regions of the US

where there are more potentially sick patients.



- But even if you have health insurance, it doesn't mean you'll get the services you need and that your insurance company will pay for it (even though you pay them every month...) If you see a doctor or go to a hospital which is not in your insurance network, you are out of luck. Your insurance wouldn't pay. Not only that, but even if you are able to find the right provider/doctor or hospital being in your network, unless you have an extremely expensive insurance plan you'll still have to pay a high deductible first – out of pocket - meaning that the first \$3,000 to \$6,000 is going to be on your tab anyway. It doesn't matter if you have to pay \$800.00 or more already for health insurance monthly. You still may not get the services you need and the main reason for bankruptcy in the US will remain to be what it was before – unaffordable medical bills to pay once you get sick.

Obama Care did allow some people to get subsidies to help for their health care policies and Obama Care does also allow more people to get on to Medicaid, the US healthcare program for the poor. Now, there are several problems with both of these “options”. First of all there are only very few people in the US who qualify for subsidies and second of all the ones who could qualify for Medicaid will not get it – because 26 US states have opted out of the extension of Medicaid already, stating they can't afford it. Second of all the patients who will get on Medicaid will not be able to find a doctor or get decent services. Because Medicaid pays such low fees to its providers that most doctors refuse to see any Medicaid patients. Now, those fees are being reduced even further, guaranteeing that Medicaid patients will find it nearly impossible to find a doctor

or dentist who accepts Medicaid. As somebody put it: “Medicaid is awful insurance, and it has very poor health outcomes that are barely better than being uninsured. So yeah, you're going to get this free insurance that doesn't actually let you see any doctors.”¹

Disaster

So far, Obama Care is a disaster. For the 10 to 15 million people getting their cancellation notices right now and are being forced to shop for more expensive insurance. For all the (new and old) patients who will be on Medicaid, whose services have been cut for decades so that it is hard to even say at this point that this insurance program really exists anymore. Obama Care is a disaster for patients with or without pre-existing conditions, with or without health insurance, because patients will still have a hard time to find a doctor and to get the services they need. They will still be the main ones to pay their own medical bills (in additions to their insurance payments), they will still be the ones losing not only their health but their houses and jobs while filing for bankruptcy in case they get seriously sick. And the reason for that is that Obama Care didn't change anything. The US healthcare system was rotten from the start and wasn't fundamentally changed at all through the ACA. Or as even Obama put it, trying to apologize, “I think we...have been trying to take on a healthcare system that has been broken for a very long time. ... And that we've been trying to change it in the least disruptive way possible.”²

Yes, exactly. No disruption to any private profits or the way the US healthcare system functions in general.

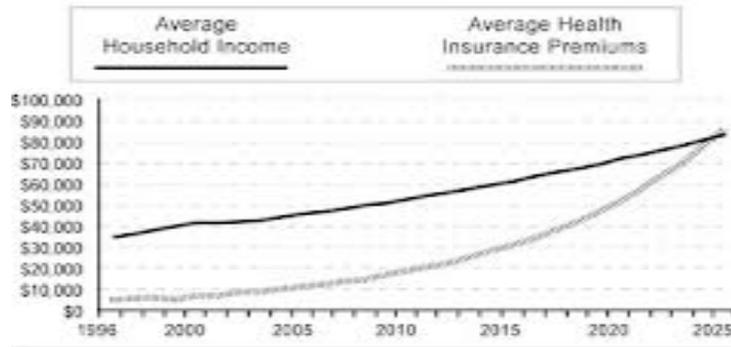
Obama Care proved once again that you can't regulate private companies. They will still do whatever they want to raise their profits and to avoid providing services. The people who'll lose – and the only ones who are being “regulated” in the end - are the working class people.

It is time to change this and some recent developments in the US showed that it is possible to change. In Seattle a 15 Dollar minimum wage was voted on (in a part of the Seattle at least), while a Socialist candidate with a much more further going program is about to enter into City Council for the first time ever. (For more information see VoteSawant.org).

¹ <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/11/05/obamacare-price-hikes-hit-red-states-hardest/>

² “President says sorry to those who lost plans”, San Francisco Chronicle, 11-8-2013, page A12

Annual Health Insurance Premiums and Household Income, 1996 to 2025



SOURCE: Reprinted with permission from: Graham Center One-Pager. Who will have health insurance in 2025? *Am Fam Physician* 72(10):2005.

The US healthcare system needs a general overhaul. Health care can't be allowed to be utilized for the private profits of some. It is a basic need and right of the people. We will need to end the private profit system which dominates the US healthcare system and should start to grant services to the ones who need it, not only to the ones who can afford it. Unfortunately ACA is not a step in that direction, but

a step backwards. Obama Care only intensifies and nurtures the flaws the existing health care system has already. Sorry, Obama, but I guess you can't (or don't want to) change the system. But maybe "we can"

Sonja E., employee for a Medi-Cal provider in Alameda County, California.