

WEAC Health Care Myth Busters 2009

A campaign has been mounted to confuse and scare the public by using false information about health care reform. The stakes are high. Should health care reform fail, insurance companies will feel unrestrained in raising health care costs just as they did after the failure of the Clinton reforms. Skyrocketing premiums will throw millions out of insurance, and those who remain insured will pick up the burden – further escalating costs and playing into the “Cadillac benefits” mantra our members often face.

To champion health care reform, we all must work together to talk about the positive reasons for reform **and** shatter the myths manufactured by opponents of reform. Here are just a few of the myths out there, followed by the real facts:

1) *Myth: “New rules could hike your health insurance premiums 95 percent.”*

Fact: Premiums will actually go down under the leading proposals in Congress.

A group known as Conservatives for Patient’s Rights (CPR) is airing ads making this claim. But the claim is contradicted by experts who find premiums will actually go down.

The analysis, conducted by a group advocating for insurance carriers, doesn’t acknowledge several elements of leading legislation that independent experts say will keep premium costs down and, in fact, lower premiums for some. That falls in line with other independent studies showing premium costs on average for Americans who currently have health coverage.

<http://www.factcheck.org/2009/08/cpr-administers-bad-facts-again/>

2) *Myth: “Any of the health care overhaul measures approved by committees in Congress will add a trillion dollars to the federal deficit.”*

Fact: No bill calls for spending \$1 trillion.

This is another claim aired by CPR. The Senate bill would add roughly \$597 billion over 10 years, and the House bill approved in committee this summer would add a much smaller \$239 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/08/cpr-administers-bad-facts-again/> and <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/06/obamas-health-care-claims/>

3) *Myth: “Washington wants to bring Canadian-style health care to the U.S.”*

Fact: The health care bills don’t call for a single-payer system.

The health care bills moving through Congress don’t call for a single-payer system like Canada’s. President Obama doesn’t back a single-payer system. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/07/canadian-straw-man/>

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4) *Myth: "They won't pay for my surgery, but we're forced to pay for abortions."*

Fact: There is no rationing, no calls for abortions to be covered.

The Family Research Council says abortions will trump care for the elderly in a public plan. In fact, none of the measures that have made it through the committee level in Congress say that abortion will be covered, and one explicitly says that no public funds will be used to finance the procedure. Furthermore, none of the bills calls explicitly for cuts in Medicare coverage, much less rationing, under a public plan. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/07/surgery-for-seniors-vs-abortions/>

5) *Myth: "(Death Panels and) public bureaucrats can decide, based on a subjective judgment of their 'level of productivity in society,' whether they are worthy of health care." – Sarah Palin*

Fact: The idea is to make it easier for people to decide in advance the care they want and *don't want* when facing death.

To set matters straight, the *Washington Post's* Ezra Klein chatted with Senator Johnny Isakson, a Georgia Republican who has worked to expand coverage of end-of-life planning. Isakson supports a voluntary, Medicare-covered counseling session to make it easier for people to talk to their doctors about end-of-life options in advance.

http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2009/08/death_panels_debunked_sen_john.html

6) *Myth: "The Obama bill will promote euthanasia."*

Fact: Medicare would cover voluntary counseling sessions, helping people make better decisions themselves.

On former Senator Fred Thompson's radio show, former lieutenant governor of New York Betsy McCaughey said that the House's proposed health care bill contained a provision that would institute mandatory counseling sessions telling seniors how "to do what's in society's best interest ... and cut your life short." In truth, that section of the bill would require Medicare to pay for voluntary counseling sessions helping seniors to plan for end-of-life medical care, including designating a health care proxy, choosing a hospice and making decisions about life-sustaining treatment. It would not require doctors to counsel that their patients refuse medical intervention.

<http://www.factcheck.org/2009/07/false-euthanasia-claims/>

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Some opponents of the House health care bill refer to specific pages of the bill, trying to make their false claims seem real. You can read the provisions in the bill for yourself by simply going to the following link to the House bill:

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h3200ih.txt.pdf

7) *Myth: "Page 29: Your health care will be rationed!"*

Fact: In no way is rationing a part of health care reform.

Page 29 defines the "essential benefits package" and discusses limits on what Americans will have to spend on health care under this minimum standard. In no way does this section stipulate health care rationing.

8) *Myth: "Page 42: The 'Health Choices Commissioner' will decide health benefits for you. You will have no choice. None."*

Fact: Most Americans will keep their current plan and the government will not decide what plans they take.

Page 42 begins to describe the Health Choices Commissioner's duties. The idea that this person will decide what benefits Americans receive is patently false, given that most Americans will keep their current plans under reform, and Americans within the exchange will have the choice of purchasing many different kinds of health plans. Rather, the Commissioner will establish minimum standards to protect Americans.