



HEALTH EQUITY: Through The Cancer Lens™

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Healthcare Reform and Health Ethics – Can They Coexist?

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Why?

- **By nearly all accounts, American Health Care is a mess.**
- **It currently costs us \$2.1 Trillion a year, nearly double per capita than Canada.**
- **In return, we are no better off than most other industrialized countries, *worse off* than many who spend a lot less, and neck-and-neck with some countries that we like to think of as being underdeveloped and spend only pennies on the dollar for their health care.**
- **Health care reform and health ethics are therefore deeply intertwined.**



What seems to be the problem?

- **Though we can point to a plethora of individual problems plaguing our system, these are often *symptoms* rather than causes.**
- **The structure of our system is a haphazard and inscrutable mess that lacks coherence and design and only tenuously adheres to our shared values.**
- **Aspects of innovation, financing, and delivery of American healthcare are susceptible to profit motives.**



What seems to be the problem?

- **Three areas (over)ripe for reform:**
 - Innovation
 - Finance
 - Delivery



Innovation

- **Lack of Evidence-based research**
- **Belmont's principle of "Justice."**
- **Profit motives drive beneficial breakthroughs as well as wasteful and needless innovation.**
- **Politics and activism can play both salutary and un-salutary functions.**



Finance

- **Employment-based health insurance is outdated, inefficient, and unfair.**
- **Government-run health coverage is currently too complicated, inefficient, and costly.**
- **Fraud and abuse.**
- **Health care is fundamentally different from widgets. Do the same market rules apply?**



Delivery

- **No delivery *system per se* in America.**
- **Disorganization, territorialism, special interests and capitalism have made for a chaotic, though lucrative enterprise, but at what cost?**
- **Fragmented delivery is costly, wasteful, and dangerous.**
- **Relentless innovation has further fragmented medicine by driving specialization.**



What's the prognosis?

- **American health care is salvageable, at least for now.**
- **We must ask ourselves what would a just and caring society do?**
- **We must ask this in a deliberative setting where hard but inevitable choices on resource (re)allocation and rationing are transparent and democratically-arrived at.**
- **However, in the current climate of culture wars, few are saying or doing anything that has the hope of making our system adequate, sustainable, just, and less costly..**

