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Health Care Reform

A Physician's Perspective by Kim Krohn

It's been a crazy year for health care folks, as we debate with each other, our patients, our representatives in government, and with the world about what we can do to fix the problems with health care.

In the US we have the most expensive health care system in the world but don't have the best outcomes in the world. Our system as it exists seems to perpetuate inequitable quality and access.

Health care providers feel the stress. Employers say they can't afford the health insurance costs. Everyone agrees that the system as it exists is just too expensive. And here we are poised on the edge of a government-led revolution. And everyone is terrified.

I completed a paper in 1991 as part of my Master of Public Health work at the University of Minnesota on the feasibility of taxing health insurance benefits provided by employers. My data showed that the tax money would be enough to fund health insurance coverage for all the uninsured in America.

Unpopular idea then, and unpopular now. Nobody likes new taxes. But the reality is that universal coverage will bring down the cost of health care country-wide, and has to be a goal of health care reform. The debate will be if and how we can pay for it.

A second vital goal of reform needs to be a re-adjustment of the proportion of physicians practicing primary care vs. non-primary care. Extensive study of cost and quality differences amongst regions of our country and around the world has shown that the best quality and lowest cost care is delivered in regions that have the highest proportion of primary care physicians to total physicians.

Unfortunately, in the US today, that proportion nationally stands at twenty-five

percent! That's not ideal—experts estimate that 75 percent is probably ideal. In North Dakota, our ratio is 41 percent.

We are among the states with the highest quality of care and the lowest cost of providing it. Unfortunately, we have been penalized for that rather than being rewarded, as the highest cost areas receive higher reimbursements—sometimes five times greater—from federal sources for the same services than we receive in North Dakota.

Thus, an additional goal of reform for North Dakota providers is correction of inequitable payments to providers. North Dakota has the oldest hospital "plant" in the country—our hospitals need resources to update their facilities.

A third vital goal of reform will be to develop an information infrastructure. This will help health care entities communicate with each other better, in order to eliminate duplicate and potentially risky testing.

Lastly, physicians feel that tort reform will be an essential element in reducing the cost of health care. "Defensive medicine" is the provision of extra tests and services to reduce the risk of the patient suing.

Because of huge awards and the risk of spending large amounts of valuable time in court, the fear of lawsuits can override common sense and good medical judgment. Putting caps on punitive damages, like we have in North Dakota, can stabilize the liability insurance costs for health care providers and reduce the numbers of lawsuits filed.

Physicians feel that tort reform will lead to better, safer medical care at a substantially lower cost.





Jacob Thraikill & Ward Lamor

Rotary Youth Leadership Awards

RYLA is Rotary's leadership training program for young people. The RYLA participants can be ages 14-30, but most clubs and districts choose to focus on a narrower age range, such as 14-18 or 19-30.

RYLA emphasizes leadership, citizenship, and personal growth, and aims to:

- Demonstrate Rotary's respect and concern for youth
- Provide an effective training experience for selected youth and potential leaders
- Encourage leadership of youth by youth

Jacob and Ward are juniors at Minot High School and after completing the application process, were chosen to attend the camp for one week in August at Crookston, MN. Both reported having an educational experience with great speakers and challenges *and* a fun time with other RYLA participants. They were proud to receive a Certificate of Recognition and the Four-Way Test silver coin.

The Prairie Flower is the official publication of Rotary Club of Minot, Minot, North Dakota. It is published every Thursday. Annual membership dues for the year 2009-2010 in the Rotary Club of Minot, ND are \$588.00 of which \$22.35 of this amount is for a subscription to the Prairie Flower for one year. 6/28/09 Om Madhok, Secretary.

John Kenney of Grangemouth Central, Scotland— President, Rotary Int'l
Ajoy Chatterjee of Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada—Governor District 5580

The Rotary Club of Minot meets 12:00 to 1:10 p.m. every Monday at the Grand International of Minot.

Board of Directors: Reed Argent, President; Teal Myre, President-Elect; Ron Merritt, Vice-President; Om Madhok, Secretary; Dave Lehner, Treasurer; William McLees, Past President.

Directors: 2009-Jen Guidinger and Dusty Zimmerman; 2010 –Robert Dick and Brent Mattson; 2011—Mike Berg and Tom Will

Standing Members: Peter Hankla, Exchange Students, Ken Kitzman, Scholarship Fund; John MacMartin, and Rotary Foundation.

Birthdays

None

Anniversaries

None



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Rotary Logo Wear

100% is our Goal

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It gives us esprit' de corps'

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Wear Rotary Logo Wear



Football

Tailgating Party!

MSU Homecoming

September 26th

11:00 a.m