



UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE IN THE UNITED STATES

The most debated topic



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Universal healthcare is one of the most contentious debates in the United States. While some Americans argue that every citizen should have access to healthcare services, other vehemently oppose the idea citing several issues, including high costs and lack of quality care. However, examining healthcare systems from other countries with universal healthcare can present rationales as to why the United States should consider such healthcare reforms. One viewpoint is that a comparative analysis of the costs, accessibility, and outcomes of healthcare systems from other countries can prove the viability of universal healthcare for the United States.

According to the World Health Organization or better known as WHO, healthcare is an expensive endeavor and often places a significant financial burden on individuals, particularly in the United States (WHO,2019). However, universal healthcare systems in other countries have managed costs more efficiently. For instance, Canada spends roughly 10.5% of its Gross Domestic Product on healthcare, while the United States spends around 17.7% of its Gross Domestic Product on healthcare.(WHO,2019)Proponents of universal healthcare argue that such healthcare systems create a more cost effective way of providing healthcare services to the public. For example, one-way universal healthcare in the United States could reduce cost is by eliminating administrative waste. The United States current healthcare system requires extensive paperwork, billing, and coding, which all leads up to high administrative costs for both providers and insurers. According to a study by the Center for American Progress, transitioning to a single-payer system could save up to \$504 billion annually in administrative costs. (Collins,2018) Additionally, a universal healthcare system would allow for negotiating power with drug companies, which could then lead to lower prescription drug prices. Another study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that Medicare, which is a single-payer system for those over 65, was able to negotiate drug prices that were 47% lower than those paid by private

insurers. (Himmelstein,2019) By reducing administrative waste and negotiating lower prices for prescription drugs, universal healthcare in the United States could potentially lead to significant cost savings.

Opponents of universal healthcare contend that this form of healthcare would be too costly and would then lead to higher taxes. While increasing taxes are a concern, there are several measures that countries with universal healthcare systems have implemented to mitigate the economic burden. For instance, countries like Germany have statutory health insurance where the government and the individual contribute a percentage of their income towards obtaining healthcare services leading to an affordable option for most (Scheiber,2017). The opponents also contend that the government's involvement with universal healthcare would lead to inefficiencies and long wait times for medical services when needed. They are saying that patients may have to wait longer for appointments and procedures due to the healthcare system being constrained by the government's budget (Sadek,2019). These factors according to the opponents of universal healthcare, would ultimately lead to a decline in healthcare quality.

The proponents of Universal healthcare have suggested that healthcare outcomes are better in countries with universal healthcare. There have been studies to show this. For example, according to the Commonwealth Fund, countries with universal healthcare systems tend to produce better healthcare outcomes and higher efficiency compared to countries without universal healthcare. An example of this is the United Kingdom has a lower mortality rate than the United States, despite its citizens living longer on average (Woolhandler,2019). Another example is the average life expectancy in the Monaco a country with universal healthcare is 87 years old, while in the United States the life expectancy on average is 77.28 years old (Morris,2023).

Opponents of universal healthcare believe that the outcome of implementing such a system would be negative. They argue that universal healthcare would be too expensive, as it would require an increase in taxes to finance it. A study by Mercatus center at George Mason University, estimated that implementing universal healthcare in the United States would cost 32.6 trillion over ten years(Holley,2018). In addition, they believe that the government-run system would create inefficiencies and long wait times for medical care. For example, in Canada patients often complain about long wait times for medical procedures and a lack of access to necessary treatments due to a shortage of medical professionals(Zhang,2019). Opponents also argue that a universal healthcare system would limit the choices of patients, as they would be forced to use healthcare facilities that are part of the government-run system. Another issue that opponents raise is the possibility of quality of medical care decreasing, as it would be difficult to attract and retain medical professionals under a government-run system. They also argue that the government will make uneducated decisions on the healthcare of individuals, which would again lead to less satisfactory in healthcare.

Proponents have suggested that Universal healthcare will ensure that everyone has access to healthcare. Millions of United States citizens lack access to healthcare services, especially those in rural and low-income areas. Studies show that universal healthcare improves healthcare utilization and healthcare outcomes. For instance, a study conducted in Canada showed that primary healthcare access was associated with decreased prevalence of unmet health needs and timely medical check-ups(Bornstein,2020). According to the World Health Organizations or WHO, a universal healthcare system aims to provide access to healthcare services to all people without discrimination and financial hardship(WHO,2021) For instance, A study in Canada showed that after implementation of universal healthcare, there was an increased utilization of

healthcare services by individuals from lower income groups(Mills, 2018). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, access to healthcare services has improved significantly since the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948, which offers comprehensive healthcare services free at the point of need (Squires, 2021). So, universal healthcare can increase accessibility to healthcare services, ensuring that individuals can receive the necessary medical treatment without financial burden or restrictions.

Opponents of universal healthcare though believe that universal healthcare would not make healthcare services more accessible. The argument that government-run healthcare may lead to long wait times and busting the budget, causing increasing healthcare costs. They also suggest this scenario could potentially reduce the quality and variety of medical services that are currently available. In addition, critics argue that government-run systems create a massive level of bureaucracy that result in inefficiency and reduction in quality of care. Opponents assert that instead of creating better access to healthcare services, universal healthcare could lead to increased inefficiencies and reduced quality of care, making it less accessible to those who truly need it.

Comparing the United States healthcare system to countries with universal healthcare highlights the inefficiencies and inequalities of the United States system. The United States spends most money on healthcare per capita, yet the country still has fewer healthcare services with significant gaps in its healthcare outcomes. The impact of implementing universal healthcare in the United States could have far reaching consequences, not only for healthcare providers but also for insurance companies that may need to implement a new form of service in line with universal healthcare practices.

Universal healthcare is a viable option for the United States to consider. The cost, accessibility, and outcomes of healthcare systems from other countries show that universal healthcare could significantly improve the United States healthcare system. While concerns over the cost and quality remain, countries with universal healthcare systems employed measures to mitigate the financial burden of such healthcare. IN the United States, a centralized and organized healthcare system could increase healthcare system could increase healthcare outcomes, decrease financial burden on citizens, and offer an improved quality of care for all.

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