

Democracy, Decisions, and Health Care Reform

by Dr. Robert Hamilton
July 10 2019 11:57 AM



ALTON - Progress in a democracy is often a slow, tedious process, especially when confronted with complicated problems that require resolution. It can be frustrating for everyone. Often, however, the more complex the problem is, the more society needs to study the problem carefully and act judiciously. An informed public is essential for us to make these decisions wisely.



In the case of health care reform, the general public has largely received propaganda presented as information. Unfortunately, the public remains largely unaware or insufficiently informed of the options available to us through the use of sound market principles. Quite often the media has offered platitudes, slogans and superficial analysis,

which both placate and deceive the public into believing that these problems can be solved by government fiat.

Solutions to health care reform require thorough analysis and application of market principles, which, for centuries, have withstood the test of time. Many individuals and organizations have been working on this problem for years and have formulated sound, often original, and sometimes brilliant suggestions for us to consider.

Unfortunately, those ideas have not reached the public mind. Now is the time for our country to make decisions based on careful analysis. By the time of the 2020 elections, the public should have a good idea of which reforms to enact, but subsequent monitoring, transparency and revision will be necessary.

The purpose of this writing and those that follow is to help educate the public to appreciate the considerable strengths and weaknesses of the present system and how to modify it in ways that maintain optimal health care quality, availability, and choices for everyone involved, while controlling cost.

In order to accomplish these market changes, the public, the health care professions, hospitals, pharmaceuticals, health insurance companies, medical equipment companies, and state and federal governments must all have a role. However, these groups must not be a circular firing squad, with each of the component groups identifying the others as the culprits responsible for imperfections in our present system.

Some of the topics I will cover in weekly articles will be: Federal formula grants to states to design and run their own health programs; expansion of HSAs and HRAS; risk mitigation programs for patients with expected high medical costs; short term insurance; Association Health Plans; price transparency; a universal health tax credit; and many others.

None of the ideas is original with me, but represent years of work and research by economists and others, who have dedicated their careers to solving these problems.

I am a retired general and vascular surgeon, trained at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine, and practiced for twenty-nine years in private practice in Alton, Illinois.

My additional experience includes: Flight Medical Officer in the United States Air Force; Veteran's hospitals in Nebraska as a medical student, a surgical resident, and teaching faculty; Board of Trustees of the Illinois State Medical Society for 12 years and president of the Madison County Medical Society; medical staff president and chairman of the surgery departments in three Alton hospitals. I am Certified by the American Board of Surgery and am a member of the AMA and the American College of Surgeons.

I have been actively involved in medical malpractice reform since 1975 and have written many newspaper articles on health care reform since 1993.

I am receiving no financial compensation for my current efforts. The opinions expressed are my own and do not represent those of any other organization (including RiverBender.com.)

I hope you will find my columns interesting and informative as our American democracy strives to improve our complex, excellent, yet imperfect health care system.

Robert F. Hamilton, M.D., FACS

Opinions expressed in this section are solely those of the individual authors and do not represent the views of RiverBender.com or its affiliates. We provide a platform for community voices, but the responsibility for opinions rests with their authors.