

More Unintended Consequences of Federal Health Reform

By: Wayne Oliver- August 8, 2013

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act also known as ObamaCare has caused some interesting responses and reactions within the medical community. Most of those reactions are the direct opposite of the stated goals of ObamaCare.

Let's look at the goals of ObamaCare and how the healthcare system and healthcare professionals are responding to the increased role of the federal government in healthcare.

First, ObamaCare promised improved access to care for the nearly 50 million uninsured Americans. However, the reality is that more physicians are either leaving private practice, retiring early or getting out of medicine entirely. A national survey conducted this summer by the nation's third largest healthcare staffing company, Jackson Healthcare, indicates that fewer doctors are in private practice – 52 percent in 2013 vs. 56 percent in 2012. The survey also found a significant shift with physicians leaving their own practice to become hospital employees – a 26 percent increase in hospitals employing physicians this year vs. 2012. Most disturbing, 42 percent of doctors say they are dissatisfied with the current climate for the practice of medicine.

So we are clear, while healthcare reform has been delayed by the Obama Administration, more and more physicians are unhappy with the state of healthcare and are leaving the profession. It makes you wonder, who is going to take care of those with current health concerns as well as the millions of new Americans who are promised new coverage under Obamacare.

Secondly, ObamaCare promised to lower the cost of healthcare. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that federal health reform would cost \$898 billion in March 2010, \$1.16 trillion in March 2011, \$1.48 trillion in March 2012 and \$1.6 trillion in February 2013. And, according to Michael Cannon, director of health policy studies at the well-respected Cato Institute, "When Congress inevitably fails to implement the ... plan's spending cuts, and expands its subsidies to more and more people, the cost of this legislation will grow beyond \$3 trillion."

While I have never been accused of being a "math whiz," even I know that when costs estimates double, it does not equate to "lowering costs."

Thirdly, President Obama emphatically told us, "If you like your healthcare plan, you will be able to keep your health plan. Period." Well, many individuals and families who currently purchase their own health insurance could receive cancellation notices later this year because their current policies are not in compliance with the 20,000 plus pages of regulations under the new health care law. In addition, those with individual policies who are not on corporate health

insurance plans may no longer be able to afford their coverage due to astronomical price increases due to changes in the market linked to the new law.

And finally, in September 2009 Obama promised the country that “I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits — either now or in the future.” Well, in a recent not-so-surprising report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), it turns out that ObamaCare is estimated to add another \$6.2 trillion to the long-term deficit.

The amount of unintended consequences of federal health reform is creating the perfect storm for the American people. Americans who were promised improved access to healthcare services will instead be faced with a serious physician shortage. Costs are out-of-control and ObamaCare does nothing to reduce spiraling healthcare expenditures. And, those health plans that we were told we could keep? Not so much. Instead, we are asking future generations of Americans to shoulder an ever-growing burden of our national debt.

Not only is the Affordable Care Act inappropriately named, but its negative effects will sicken the American healthcare system far worse than when we began this endeavor.