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## Solve underlying problems first or doom national health care

### Letter to the Editor

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In the next few months, our government will delve into what will assuredly be a challenging discussion about national health care. Many experts will be called to testify, and in the end, legislators will write and pass what will be a complex, and less than cost-effective, program.

The reason it will be seen as a failure over time is because real health care issues will not be addressed.

According to Arnold Kling in "Crisis of Abundance: Rethinking How We Pay for Health Care," since 1975, per-capita spending on health care has doubled, but in only a small number of cases has increased spending yielded noticeable results in patients.

So if few noticeable advances have been seen, why has there been such a cost increase?

Several reasons can be seen as contributing factors:

- The common assumption that high-tech diagnostic equipment is always more reliable than a doctor's empirical knowledge
- The dramatic jump in doctors specializing in one field of medicine
- Heroic efforts in end-of-life treatment that seldom show any positive results
- Doctors ordering unnecessary and expensive high-tech diagnostic tests, and referring patients to specialists, out of fear of malpractice lawsuits
- Americans becoming accustomed to not having to pay any out-of-pocket health care expenses
- The tendency for patients to not concern themselves with total costs when someone else is paying.

These are tough issues, but unless Congress and the president are willing to address them, the national health care program will turn out to be a cancer on society.

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