

ObamaCare's bitter pill for doctors

By Nat Hentoff, senior fellow at the Cato Institute

August 9th, 2013

Dr. Tom Delbanco, a professor of general medicine and primary care at Harvard Medical School, raises a critical matter about ObamaCare that has been largely unreported regarding primary care doctors. He worries that “as the new health care exchanges offer affordable insurance to more and more Americans, there is risk that a flood of new patients may overwhelm the already-besieged primary care workforce.”

Since ObamaCare's health care cost-cutting rules do not focus on the differences among individual patients, Delbanco makes a point that “We The People” must keep in mind as ObamaCare takes over many of our lives:

“Numbers such as blood pressures, sugar or lipid levels tell only part of the story for individuals whose genes, cultural habits, psyches and social circumstances vary widely.”

Gathering this information will be a waste of time and costs in the ObamaCare system.

But as I can demonstrate from my own experience with my longtime primary care physician, his focus on the individuality of his patients keeps strengthening the quality of my life.

So I was not surprised to see this report from Tom Howell Jr. in The Washington Times: “The United States needs 16,000 more primary care physicians to meet its current health needs, a problem that will only get worse if nothing is done to accommodate millions of newly insured residents under President Obama's health care law in the coming decade, according to a Senate report”

Consider these numbers from a recent health care survey conducted by the Deloitte Center for Health Solutions:

“Six in 10 physicians say that it is likely that many physicians will retire earlier than planned in the next one to three years. This perception is fairly uniform among all physicians, irrespective of age, gender or medical specialty.”

Furthermore: “Nearly three-quarters of physicians (higher among surgical specialists at 81 percent) think the best and brightest (students) may not consider a career in medicine ... while more than half believe that physicians will retire (62 percent) or scale back practice hours (55 percent) based on how the future of medicine is changing.”

That is understandable. In an interview with World Net Daily, “a spokeswoman for the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, Dr. Jane Orient ... told WND's Bob Unruh that doctors already have started leaving the profession through early retirement. Among those who remain, some will seek alternatives to what they see coming in the federal government's takeover of health care,” she said.

And she told Unruh: “I think it's a disaster for patients. They may lose the doctor they relied on all their lives.”

Any of you who voted twice for Obama have any regrets?

Speaking of what may be your future — including its duration — “Orient affirmed that many doctors are unable to continue a private practice and will end up working for a corporation hospital, where the profits are distributed to shareholders.

“She warned that such scenarios often end up giving the feeling of an assembly line, where a patient sees a doctor briefly, is given a diagnosis and shown the door.

“Doctors in that system, she said, will be punished if they spend too much time on a patient, or possibly if they provide too much treatment.”