

**USA Today**

## **Opposing view: Despite flaws, U.S. health care the best**

By Michael Tanner

October 18, 2011

When Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi needed heart surgery, he didn't go to an Italian hospital. He didn't go to Austria or the Netherlands. He had his surgery at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio.

Similarly, when Canadian Human Resources Minister Belinda Stronach needed treatment for breast cancer, she had it done at a California hospital. And, when then-Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams needed to have a leaky heart valve repaired, he had it done at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Florida.

These high-profile patients were following in the footsteps of tens of thousands of patients from around the world who come to the United States for treatment every year.

They come here because they know that despite its flaws, the U.S. health care system still provides the highest quality care in the world. Whether the disease is cancer, pneumonia, heart disease or AIDS, the chances of a patient surviving are far higher in the U.S. than in other countries.

According to a study published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, the U.S. is at the top of the charts when it comes to surviving cancer. For example, more than two-thirds of women diagnosed with cancer will survive for at least five years in the U.S. That's 6 percentage points better than the next best country, Sweden.

Moreover, the U.S. drives much of the innovation and research on health care worldwide. Eighteen of the last 25 winners of the Nobel Prize in medicine are either U.S. citizens or work here. U.S. companies have developed more than half of all new major medicines introduced worldwide over the past 20 years. And Americans played a key role in 80% of the most important non-pharmaceutical medical advances of the past 40 years.

Does U.S. health care cost too much? Sure. But on a year-to-year basis, the cost in other countries is rising about as fast. Do we need to expand coverage? Certainly. But at least we've avoided the government-imposed rationing that

afflicts so many countries. We aren't perfect, but if you're sick, the United States is still the place you want to be.