
Obama Nominee to Head Medicare, Medicaid Post Favors British Rationing

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Washington, DC (LifeNews.com) -- President Barack Obama has appointed another nominee for an influential government position who will upset pro-life advocates. But, this time, the nominee poses concerns not on abortion but on end-of-life issues like euthanasia, and rationing of health care.

Obama selected Dr. Donald Berwick to become the director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the office that oversees government health care programs.

Berwick is an outspoken admirer of the British National Health Service and its rationing arm, the National Institute for Clinical Effectiveness ([NICE](#)). Other critics have predicted since the earliest days of the Obama administration that NICE-style health care was coming.

That includes Wesley J. Smith, who has frequently [condemned the approach](#).

During a 2008 speech to British physicians, Berwick said "I am romantic about the National Health Service. I love it," and calling it "generous, hopeful, confident, joyous, and just."

Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, [wrote more](#) about the problems with Berwick in an opinion column at the Daily Caller.

Recalling that opponents of the government-run health care bill were blasted for bringing up "death panels," Tanner writes: "But if President Obama wanted to keep a lid on that particular controversy, he just selected about the worst possible nominee."

In his comments lauding the British health care system, Tanner says "Berwick was referring to a British health care system where 750,000 patients are awaiting admission to NHS hospitals."

"The government's official target for diagnostic testing was a wait of no more than 18 weeks by 2008. The reality doesn't come close. The latest estimates suggest that for most specialties, only 30 to 50 percent of patients are treated within 18 weeks. For trauma and orthopedics patients, the figure is only 20 percent," he writes.

"Overall, more than half of British patients wait more than 18 weeks for care. Every year, 50,000 surgeries are canceled because patients become too sick on the waiting list to proceed," he continues.

"The one thing the NHS is good at is saving money. After all, it is far cheaper to let the sick die than to provide care," Tanner adds.

NICE is at the forefront of the rationing in the British health care system.

"It acts as a comparative-effectiveness tool for NHS, comparing various treatments and determining whether the benefits the patient receives, such as prolonged life, are cost-efficient for the government," Tanner explains. "NICE, however, is not simply a government agency that helps bureaucrats decide if one treatment is better than another. With the creation of NICE, the U.K. government has effectively put a dollar amount to how much a citizen's life is worth."

Tanner points out that Berwick has already admitted health care rationing is coming.

"It's not a question of whether we will ration care," the Obama nominee said in a magazine interview for Biotechnology Healthcare, "It is whether we will ration with our eyes open."

Tanner concludes: "Recent reports suggest that the recently passed health care bill will be far more expensive than originally projected. As it becomes apparent that that ObamaCare is unsustainable, the calls for controlling its costs through rationing will grow louder. With Donald Berwick running the government's health care efforts, those voices will have a ready ear."

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