

For a Healthy Healthcare
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Will doctors support single payer health insurance?

You are probably aware of the advantages to patients of universal healthcare: elimination of patient costs including deductibles and co-payments; elimination of medical debt; expansion of healthcare to those without insurance; providing care in underserved and rural areas. You may ask “Will doctors support a transition to universal health care?” A recent survey of doctors revealed that doctors are distressed by the current health system which has developed over the past 20 years due to the increased rate of profit-driven ownership of medical care. This has resulted in the takeover of hospitals, clinics and insurance by large corporations which prioritize income over patients health. This survey was part of a two-year study underwritten by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation <https://pnhp.org/moral-injury-in-medicine/>

Half the doctors reported insufficient time for optimal care for their patients, and one-third face patient loads that they view as unsafe. Furthermore 35% report that pressure from administrators and insurers to reduce costs are affecting their ability to provide the best possible care, and another 25% are considering leaving their jobs due to this distress.

These pressures are causing doctors “moral injury,” a term from military psychiatry to describe the psychological injury that occurs when a person is forced to act against their deeply held values. Physicians want to deliver high-quality, evidence-based care to all their patients, but too often encounter barriers designed to generate profits. These barriers include prior authorization, coverage denials, productivity quotas, and excessive documentation.

Many physicians see that a system driven primarily by profit and shareholder interest will not be fixed by reforms and regulation. The industry has repeatedly shown a capacity to undermine or bypass these regulations. Many providers, including the significant number who are members of the Colorado Healthcare Coalition, believe that nothing short of a restructuring of the health care system can remedy the escalating problems of the current American healthcare. We see that unlinking health care from for-profit entities will reduce administrative burdens and allow us to focus on the needs of the patient. Those of us who have worked in international universal healthcare systems can attest to improved care outcomes which are cost effective. .