

091608 Musings on the News of the Day...

..three times a month I'll be posting my musings about emerging health and policy issues and challenges and sharing sound and video clips from current media appearances. On the "off week" an HMPRG board member will guest publish.

I'm pleased to have this opportunity. It's important to note that in these musings our board members will be speaking for themselves about issues of the day, specifically are not expressing the positions of Health and Medicine as an organization.

The biggest news these days of course is the elections. The problems confronting our nation have not been more dire since the 1929 depression. In the extremity of political combat and economic stress, as well as international instability, remarkable paradoxes emerge.

For example, this country has for many years been bound to orthodox free-market ideology. The conservative viewpoint has dominated virtually every political expression, so it is at once humorous and frightening to hear the conventional wisdom associated with the tragic housing finance collapse. Far from relying on "the market", captains of industry and leaders of government suddenly sound like extreme socialists calling for the bail out of the stricken sub-prime mortgage disaster with estimates of costs to be borne by the US taxpayer. Just what we needed when the government has kited the national deficit to unprecedented depths.

On our favorite subject, health care reform, there are some gains in terms of popular support for single payer national health insurance, but it cannot be denied that the presidential debates have never seriously evaluated true reform-Medicare for all, single payer.

Happily the congressional scene is somewhat better. As we speak, 91 members of congress (all democrats so far) have indicated their support for HB 676, Representative Conyers bill which would bring the blessings of Medicare for all and, even more important, bring health care on a solid basis to our entire nation.

The game plan for progressives, it seems to me, is to maximize the members of congress committed to reform. Also, of course, we need sponsors and growing support in the Senate. If we can "hit the ground running" in November, we have a serious opportunity for success, assuming we elect a progressive president. We have a Rooseveltian (Franklin that is) situation. There are many pressing challenges that must be addressed, but a breakthrough on health care (think Lyndon Johnson) offers the best promise for an abrupt shift away from the economic morass that has cursed our country for the past eight years...

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