Obama gives what the doctor did not order

by Phyllis_Schlafly

Barack Obama forced a bitter pill down the throats of Americans that the doctor did not order and patients do not want. Obama snuck into the stimulus bill a new system for rationing medical care, and he got Congress to ram it through the House and Senate without reading it.

Maybe Obama, Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi thought no one would notice what they slipped into H.R.1 since rationing medical care has nothing to do with stimulating the economy. But former New York lieutenant governor Betsy McCaughey sounded the alarm in her Bloomberg.com article aptly entitled "Ruin Your Health With the Obama Stimulus Plan."

She described how stealth provisions provide massive new funding of billions of dollars to an Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology to monitor treatments and decide which are cost-effective and which will be permitted or denied. Currently, patients make that decision without government interference as long as the care is safe and effective.

Congress thus legislated a fundamental shift away from the "safe and effective" standard and replaced it with what a bureaucrat thinks is cost-effective or has "clinical effectiveness." Americans are waking up from their political anesthesia to realize that Obama's "change" really means government control over access to medical treatments for our illnesses.

Liberals love to control and ration as much as they love to tax and spend. Al Gore has spent nearly a decade spewing the nonsense of "global warming," which is a device for government to control and ration energy.

Team Obama may have overplayed its hand in bringing control-and-ration to medical care. The news has spread like wildfire on the Internet and talk radio, and nonpolitical patients in doctors' waiting rooms can be heard talking about it.

The United States is different from Canada and England in an essential respect: Here a patient can get a diagnosis and life-saving treatment within days, if not hours. Ted Kennedy (age 76) received immediate surgery for his otherwise inoperable brain cancer, a use of scarce medical resources that rationing would not allow for an ordinary patient.

American patients who have cancer or other life-threatening problems need and get prompt care, and we don't want that to "change." In Canada, England and elsewhere, patients are deemed by the government to be unworthy of treatment due to age or severity of illness, and they die while sitting on waiting lists for rationed care.

There is more funding for this new Big Brother bureaucracy in the stimulus bill than for all the armed forces combined. Wasteful pork includes billions to pay for the U.S. Census (which Team Obama is already planning to manipulate), and silly carbon-capture demonstrations (to appease the global warming lobby).

Meanwhile, the stimulus bill lays the foundation for new federal surveillance over electronic medical records, with an online medical record for each and every American. The bill establishes a massive new "federal coordinating council for comparative clinical effectiveness research" to devise ways to ration care based on the bureaucrats' review of patient data.

There can be no patient privacy in a national database of medical records because government, insurers, employers, ex-spouses and hackers will find ways to access it. Doctors will spend more time surfing the Internet and typing in data than listening to patients, and of course there will be inevitable computer mistakes.

The declining American Medical Association (AMA), which is increasingly a shill for leftwing advocacy, tried to downplay the outrage of giving a government bureaucracy access to everyone's medical records and punishing doctors who don't treat as the government wants. But there is no denying the harm of this new system that facilitates government oversight of an electronic database and gives bureaucrats (who never went to medical school) the power to punish doctors who provide "too much" care.

Doctors who resist the government's guidelines will be controlled by slashing their fees. Doctors will lose their autonomy, just as Tom Daschle sought, and some patients will be left with nowhere to turn for their illnesses.

Our medical system has long been the envy of the world. That's why foreigners come to the United States for our superb medical care, spending more than a billion dollars a year here.

A true stimulus bill would seek to multiply that revenue by encouraging more private enterprise in medicine rather than installing a new bureaucracy to build and oversee electronic medical records, control doctors' decisions, and ration care.

In 1993, Hillary and Bill Clinton tried with all their might to impose a government takeover of all health care, and the 1994 midterm elections repudiated their efforts. The midterm elections of 2010 could be just what the doctor ordered.

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