

# The Truth about Health Care Political Advertisements

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Generals throughout history have been disgusted with the actions and decisions made by politicians in military matters. Likewise, economists often resort to their books trying to make sense of what policymakers say and do. Physicians and other health care professionals find irony and humor in what political candidates say and claim. I guess that is how democracies work, but should it?

Seeing and hearing the ironies, I console myself by remembering that all is fair in politics and war, or is it? For example, take the political advertisement: A bereaved gentleman losing his wife to cancer. He gets all the sympathy that anyone deserves for the loss of a lifelong companion until he blames candidate Mitt Romney for the loss.

The misguided and misconstrued ad claims that if he had kept his job, he would have insurance; hence, enabling his wife to be treated for her terminal cancer.

That comes as a slap on the face of everyone in the health care profession, because we still have to hear proof that there is any cancer patient out there who has been or is denied health care due to lack of insurance. In fact, I dare challenge anyone who comes up with a story to prove that point. Even the gentleman in the ad admits that when his wife got sick, he took her to the hospital and was treated, although she had no health insurance coverage. How about that?

The safety net built into this society has worked like magic, and continues to do so, even in the most difficult times as we witness now. Our cancer center and many local hospitals never decline treating the uninsured cancer patients. This is how it works and has worked for decades.

Currently, if an uninsured patient develops cancer, there are several scenarios that come into play. The patient can apply for disability and then, if approved, can possibly receive Medicaid based on their income. In another scenario, if the patient and/or spouse make less than approximately \$70,000, they will qualify to receive free chemotherapy drugs (brand names) from the pharmaceutical companies who have been generally generous in providing the free drugs. Most physicians, on other hand, would waive their professional fees for the uninsured patients who do not qualify for Medicaid.

When surgery or other expensive procedures rendered at hospitals are needed, most hospitals do (or should) provide the free service, since they get indirect subsidies from the government as part of the safety net program that has been in place for many decades.

In fact, the gentleman's wife in the ad would probably have qualified for Social Security Disability and Medicaid unless he had substantial assets and isn't saving money meant for the dire, rainy days. There can be no worse rain than during the storm of cancer affliction.

So, are politicians being disingenuous in advertisements like this? Are these ads disheartening to the health care professionals who have dedicated their lives to help the sick, regardless of whether they are paid or not?

You are the judge. All I can say is: I challenge all readers who know of anyone who can prove that their cancer treatment was denied at our cancer center or the regional hospitals, due to lack of insurance, to step forward. One case would be enough for me to reconsider my position and opinion, but I know better that such events do not happen. We have had a safety net that has worked and continues to do so. Health care institutions throughout the U.S. take pride in doing their best to help the sick. They certainly denounce slandering their ethical standings by those who aspire political gains.

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