How Will Doctors Handle The Flood Of Newly Insured Patients?

Albert Fuchs, M.D.

I distinctly remember that in first grade I had an idea of breathtaking wisdom and profundity. Candy should be free. You may have had a similar thought at the same age. This idea was supported by an incontrovertible rationale, namely that I really liked candy. Tragically, it only took a moment for my parents to expose a flaw in my otherwise revolutionary scheme. They suggested that if candy were free, no one would bother making candy. All candy makers would do something else that allowed them to make a living. Thus exposed to the painful realities of life, I put the thought out of my head for about forty years.

But now I realize that modern bureaucracy makes my vision more possible than ever. Candy makers obviously won't work for nothing, but they could be paid to give away candy by a national program (Candycare or maybe the Affordable Candy Act). Employees through their work could contract with third party payers (like Blue Candy) to pay for their candy needs. Thus candy would still be free to the consumer and no first grader would ever have to be denied his gummy bears.

Complications may still arise in this ingenious scheme. Prices, after all, play a critical role in marketplaces. They reflect the resources consumed and risks taken in producing a product. They force consumers to make important decisions about what they need and what they can do without. And they encourage conservation. The only reason we don't all buy the most expensive product in any class of products (cars, houses, shoes, whatever) is because we'd rather do something else with the money we save. Prices also give producers a powerful incentive to improve quantity and keep prices low, that is they cause competition between producers.

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