

## **Patient Safety Advocates' Statement on Healthcare Reform**

August 13, 2009

Every year, 15 million incidents of medical harm occur in America. As a result, more than one hundred thousand patients needlessly die and millions are injured.

Every year, millions of patients are infected by mostly preventable healthcare-spread disease in America's hospitals. Almost one hundred thousand of these victims die and countless more are injured.

Every year, tens of millions of Americans live without the security of basic health insurance. Too often, individuals and even entire families lose their life savings and become bankrupt as a consequence of not being able to get health insurance or having inadequate coverage.

Every year, the economic toll from this systemic dysfunction and widespread negligence runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars.

For more than four decades the problems with our healthcare system have only grown worse, even as healthcare leaders and others have done little that is meaningful to fix the lethal and otherwise destructive dysfunction.

Now, for the first time in more than ten administrations, we have a chance to achieve long needed healthcare reform that promises to greatly improve patient safety, make health insurance more affordable and more widely available, while drastically cutting expenditures through meaningful reduction in waste and fraud and improved quality of care. Disagreement over how best to address this complex problem is part of the American way and we cherish open, honest, and vigorous debate, as the nation goes through this process.

While fear of changing even a broken system is understandable, exploiting that fear and generating anger through disinformation and inflammatory rhetoric for greed and political gain is unconscionable.

We are shocked and dismayed by the recent campaign by some well-known politically connected individuals and organizations with vested interests whose tactics of spreading disinformation such as, "the President wants socialized medicine" and "this is a government takeover of healthcare," or "they want to create death panels," etc., are meant to sow greater fear and incite anger against the very change that is so urgently needed. We categorically reject and condemn these false and malicious statements and shameful tactics.

We are patient advocates and consumer activists. We represent true grassroots organizations, and we are regular citizens who have seen first hand the devastating effects of a healthcare system that is ranked first in research and technology and dead last in the delivery of healthcare among industrialized nations. We have been injured and we have lost loved ones and we have fought tirelessly for change. Many of us receive no compensation for our work.

We agree with the President when he refers to the current system as providing "skewed incentives" that "promote quantity over quality."

We agree with the President that by implementing evidence-based best practices we can make our healthcare system what it should always have been.

We agree with the President when he says that our current healthcare system is economically "unsustainable." Moreover, it is, in large measure, intolerable.

We have been in the trenches fighting to confront these long-festering problems within our healthcare system for years, as we deal daily with our own pain and the pain of more and more victims.

We wholeheartedly endorse the President's courageous efforts to finally fix what is broken with America's healthcare system while expanding upon what isn't.

Sincerely,

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