

## **Food for Thought – Health Care & Voting: What’s the Connection?**

This coming November’s elections will be important for a number of reasons, but in particular, the future of your medical care and access to it could be decided for years to come. We say this because of the following:

Congress, since the last election has not passed a replacement health care bill for Obama Care previously signed into law. Congress has refused to fund Obama Care according to the existing law and because of this many insurers have dropped out from providing coverage, which has resulted in fewer carriers and increased prices and decreased coverage to consumers. Regardless of how you may have felt about Obama Care (we were not all that enthusiastic about it), it provided medical care for many people who could not afford health care while reducing federal and state welfare rolls.

Congress has repeatedly attempted to reduce or eliminate Medicare and Social Security, which would place many, disabled and senior citizens at risk for medical care and being able to make ends meet financially. If this occurs in an ever aging population, the cost of health care will increase not only at the state and federal levels, but individual policies as well because of these patients going on welfare or seeking health care at emergency rooms.

Congress has not yet addressed the Insurance Industries lack of accountability, as they are not subject to anti-trust regulation. Therefore, they can set prices as they choose and spend only slightly less than the pharmaceutical industry on influencing congress. What this has translated to is that insurance premiums cost more and deliver less with high deductibles being standard. Most patients we see with insurance have policies that provide little benefit because of the high deductible. Insurance companies also were not allowed to turn down patients for preexisting conditions under Obama Care, but are now beginning to do so and will continue to do so if Congress does not act.

Since the last election and the failure to enact health care legislation to replace Obama Care we, as well as other physicians, have made the following observations:

Some patients admitted to hospitals following emergency room visits receive suboptimal care in that there is little follow up, medications are not monitored resulting in adverse reactions, and/or they may be discharged prior to having their chief complaint fully addressed. This appears to us to be a function of reimbursement by insurance companies who no longer are part of Obama Care and can dictate what medical care doctors can provide.

Secondly, Medicare patients either receive suboptimal care or excessive care depending upon what Medicare will reimburse. This also occurs with disability patients who are in this system.

Lastly, reports by our patients following emergency room visits varies as to the type and quality of care they receive. In some cases it is very good to excessive, while in others it

is minimal and suboptimal resulting in early release and a need to return later because the condition has become worse. This too seems to be a function of insurance reimbursement.

This is why the upcoming elections are important for your future health care. Naturopathic physicians in Arizona are not routinely covered by insurance but we are seeing an increasing number of patients that no longer derive optimal benefit from the present system. Regardless, it will be important to vote for candidates that value quality health care and protect the rights of patients in the medical market place. For all of the reasons we have mentioned, it is important to research your candidates well and vote for those who will look out for your interests rather than the insurance and pharmaceutical industries.

We encourage you to get out and vote and make sure your neighbors and relatives do so as well. It will be particularly important for the younger generation to vote as what happens during the next few election cycles will impact them greatly. Despite what has come out of Washington DC in the past few years, health care is a right guaranteed under the constitution, not a privilege. **Please be sure to exercise your right and vote in November!**