

Should Universal Healthcare be Implemented in the United States?

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Take a moment and imagine you've just been in a nearly fatal car crash. Your ears are ringing, you're disoriented, and the worst part is that there's nothing you could've done to prevent it from happening. You're taken to the hospital and spend hours in surgery, without which, you would've slowly and painfully bled to death. After taking a few days in the hospital to recover fully, you get to go home. Other than taking meds for a few weeks and being careful about rigorous movement, you can forget it ever happened. That is until you're hit with the bill. Insurance will only cover so much, and you now owe way more than you can afford. Suddenly you wish you hadn't been saved at all due to the thousands of dollars of debt you're now in. Cost is the number one concern for many Americans in terms of healthcare and could be solved if we implemented something called universal healthcare. Many conservatives are against the idea of universal healthcare because they value having a smaller government, and in turn lower taxes. Universal healthcare would likely cause a rise in taxes, but this is a crucial sacrifice for many Americans. Despite this negative outcome, universal healthcare would prevent Americans from having to pay out of pocket for healthcare and would improve the quality of that care. Our economy would also seek benefits from it, and individuals with chronic diseases would benefit substantially.

As defined by the *World Health Organization* (2022), universal healthcare is where everyone has access to care without needing to worry about paying it off later. Around the world, many countries have made the switch to universal care, as it makes more sense for a country to care about its citizens' health rather than profit. In countries in northern Europe, like The Netherlands or Sweden, it's common to walk in and out of clinics without a single fee, whereas in the U.S. you may shell out a couple hundred dollars just for a routine checkup. The idea of this may seem obviously flawed. Why are

Americans going into crazy amounts of debt just for needing safe medical care? To understand exactly why we haven't switched to universal healthcare, we must fully understand what implementing universal care would look like in our country, and what the benefits would be.

Rising taxes are a worthy sacrifice for implementing universal healthcare in the U.S. A major issue conservative Americans are concerned about are high taxes. Missouri Senator Roy Blunt from *RPC Senate* (2018) argues that universal 'free' healthcare sounds great, but that there are hidden costs around every corner that would be implemented into your taxes, so really, it's more of a prepay plan for your care. To contradict this, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman from *Physicians for a National Health Program* (2019) write, "The starting point of any intelligent conversation about health in America must be that it's a cost for all of us – and a massive one." For the conversation about universal healthcare to even begin in America, it must be acknowledged that for it to be possible, there will be a cost, whether it be for private funding like we currently have, or for the possibility of universal care. Even many young Republicans are in favor of universal healthcare according to Medicare consultant expert, Ron Elledge, who writes for *Medicare Plans Patient Resources Center* (2021). Currently, going in for something as minimal as a routine checkup has some paying bizarre amounts of money, whereas in other medically advanced countries, things like this are free. Senator Blunt may argue against universal healthcare because of how it would increase taxes, but a country that calls itself the greatest in the world should work to care for all its citizens and be able to provide safe and affordable healthcare to them all regardless of financial background.

To add, many conservatives worry that universal healthcare would cause a decline in the quality of care received in hospitals and clinics, but they fail to recognize that the

current quality of care in our country's healthcare system already isn't great, and that universal healthcare would bring positive changes to it. Currently, according to *The American Academy of Family Physicians* (2022), the cost of healthcare is continuing to rise at an unfeasible rate, whilst quality suffers. To move to a more dynamic and productive population, it is essential that Americans have access to quality and affordable healthcare. It can be easily observed that our quality of care isn't great when we look at staffing in hospitals, as many nurses and other healthcare workers have been going on strike due to being overworked, and unable to provide the best care possible. When compared to The Netherlands, which found the perfect balance between quality of care and having it be free, what we have in the U.S. is laughable. Ultimately, the argument that quality of care would decrease with universal healthcare is flawed when we consider the current state of our country's care.

Furthermore, those who are against the idea of universal healthcare often argue that it would destroy our economy, when in reality it would have great benefits for it. Josh Bivens, a director of research at the *Economic Policy Institute* (2020), delves into what it will really mean to implement universal healthcare in the U.S. By implementing universal healthcare, wages and salaries would go up due to businesses not having to pay for health insurance. In turn, this would make more objectively good jobs available because of the chance for higher pay and not having to worry about receiving health insurance as an employee benefit. If universal healthcare were implemented in the U.S., we would likely see wages rise, as employers and businesses wouldn't have to worry about providing health insurance benefits any longer. This is even further proved by Jaeger Nelson, of *Congressional Budget Office*, who has a Ph. D. in economics, saying, "The composition of workers' labor compensation would change because employers

would no longer provide health care benefits" (2022). Overall, universal healthcare would have great affects for the U.S. economy in terms of job opportunities and wages.

Those who suffer from chronic diseases would benefit substantially from the implementation of universal healthcare. Due to a monopoly of the insulin supply companies in the U.S., the cost has continued to rise, leaving diabetics to attempt to ration their insulin, and die from doing so. From Bram Sable-Smith of *National Public Radio* (2018), Nicole Smith-Holt discusses how her twenty-six-year-old son, Alec, died from diabetic ketoacidosis from rationing his insulin. He had only recently been diagnosed with type one diabetes and couldn't afford his insulin, and in attempt to save it, died just before he could afford more. Alec's story is just one of many of individuals dying because of the rising cost of their necessary medications. For a country that many die hard Americans claim is the greatest in the world, this shouldn't be considered normal. Universal healthcare would help to prevent cases like Alec's from happening for Americans suffering with chronic diseases.

Briefly, the U.S. should switch to universal healthcare because of the many benefits we would seek throughout the country. Despite how it may raise taxes, that is a sacrifice that would have to be made in order to prevent paying out of pocket for care, improve the quality of care received, especially for those with chronic diseases, and how our economy would improve. Before conducting my own research on the topic, I'd believed mainly what my Republican parents did, that universal healthcare would cause disaster in our country. Being able to do my own research without having to look through my parents' lens was incredibly eye-opening, as I was able to make my own raw opinion on the matter without their conservative foundation fueling my ideas. It's clear that the U.S.'s healthcare system is seriously outdated, as many Americans spend their entire

adult lives stressing about if they can afford it if something unfortunate happens to them. Many other developed countries have switched to universal healthcare, and it's just one of those things that will be implemented sooner or later, as it's the way of the future. As mentioned previously, for a country that many consider the greatest in the world, our healthcare system needs work and reform. If those in power really cared about what was going on in our country, universal healthcare would've been implemented already. Ensuring that everyone, no matter their financial background, can receive safe and affordable medical care, is something that our generation must be more concerned about. The likelihood of needing emergency medical care at some point in your life is inevitable, whether it be from something as sudden as a car crash, or as long-lived as cancer. Take a stance on what you believe about universal healthcare, and if you think it's right for a country to care more about its people's wealth than its health.

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