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### Pros, Cons, and the Barriers to Implementing a Universal Healthcare System in the United States

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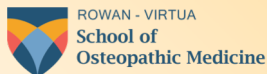
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# Pros, Cons, and the Barriers to Implementing a Universal Healthcare System in the United States

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## Background

- The United States has the most expensive healthcare system in the world. Despite that, it also has worse health outcomes than that of several other countries. The United States is also the only developed country without universal healthcare.
- Universal healthcare, also known as a single-payer healthcare system, refers to the concept that the government finances and governs healthcare for most, if not all residents of the country.
- The United States currently has a multi-payer system, which means that healthcare is financed through various sources such as through the public and private sectors.

## Purpose

- The purpose of this presentation is to investigate the potential benefits and drawbacks for a universal healthcare system in the United States as well as identifying some of the potential barriers towards implementing a universal healthcare system, based on current, peer-reviewed literature.

## Methods

- Peer-reviewed articles relevant to the topic were collected from databases such as PubMed and JAMA.
- PRISMA criteria were used to identify relevant publications after applying inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Data regarding health outcomes and healthcare expenses among different countries were compared and analyzed to help determine the effectiveness of universal healthcare.

## Results

- Based on the literature review, it can be reasonably inferred that the United States would significantly benefit from implementing a universal healthcare system as it shows improved health outcomes as well as reduced healthcare expenditure, partially due to an emphasis on primary and preventative care, thus increasing access to overall care.
- Some potential drawbacks include increased wait-times for patients to see a provider due to increases in demand for medical services as well as potential abuse of resources.
- Reimbursements rates for providers could be decreased if they are not addressed properly. It can be inferred that providers would be less likely to practice in rural/lower income areas with decreased reimbursement, thereby reducing access to healthcare in those areas, which essentially would defeat the purpose of universal health care.

## Discussion

- It can be argued that healthcare is a basic human right and should be provided to all residents of a country, especially since the United States is among the wealthiest countries.
- it would take a significant overhaul, both financially and structurally, to convert a multi-payer system to a single-payer system, which could lead to a potential increase in federal taxes. There are also arguments that a universal healthcare system could lead to increased wait-times for patients to see a provider due to increases in demand for medical services as well as potential abuse of resource.
- Policies and programs such as the Affordable Care Act, Medicare, and the Military Health System represent important steps towards eventually possibly having a universal healthcare system.
- Some people consider universal healthcare to be "socialized medicine" or "medical communism", which can create a negative association of universal healthcare to some. Some even argue that such a system would also restricts "freedom of choice" by removing the multitude of health insurance plans available for consumers to purchase. Others would prefer less government regulation and involvement in general, let alone in just healthcare.
- In addition, lobbying by pharmaceutical companies, for-profit hospitals, and insurance companies pose a major barrier.

## Conclusion

- Universal healthcare would provide many benefits for the United States; however, political considerations pose a significant barrier that will need to be overcome before universal healthcare is implemented.
- That being said, there has been an increase in support for universal healthcare among Americans, in which small incremental steps can eventually lead the way there.

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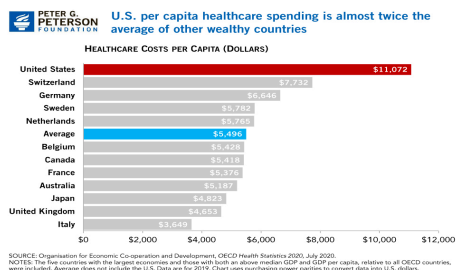


Figure 1. Healthcare Spending Per Capita  
Source: Data: OECD Health Statistics 2019.

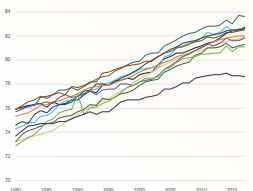


Figure 2. Average Life Expectancy Among Developed Nations  
Takaseen R, Abrams MK. U.S. Health Care from a Global Perspective. 2019. Higher Spending, Worse Outcomes? Improving Health Care Quality. <https://doi.org/10.30997/tyvy-k229>.