

# A Vision of Health Care for the Next Millennium

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE A SYSTEM THAT RECOGNIZES THAT THE health of our community as a whole is necessary for the well-being of every individual in it;

A future in which we adopt a funding system that has as its purpose to spread the risk of the few among the resources of the many;

A system that does not abandon the sick in the time of their gravest need, nor add confusion or distress at a time of physical, emotional, and financial vulnerability;

A community that does not ask for any parent to choose between food and clothing for their children or basic medical services for themselves, or for their children;

A system of care in which the fundamental priorities are set by the people who are subject to illness, not by those who profit from their care;

A health care financing system in which the priorities of the individual count for more than do the decisions of their employers;

A system in which losing one's job or ability to work does not mean the loss of access to affordable health care.

I see a future in which we understand that managed care is vastly better than unmanaged and squandered care; a future in which we affirm that managed care is a way of effectively treating illness, not only a way of managing costs.

In this future, reason and evidence will prevail against emotionalism or unsubstantiated claims. It will be understood and accepted that overtreatment may be just as bad as undertreatment.

In this future health care system, the compassionate heart of our community has come to recognize that unneeded or ineffective care given to one person creates a diminished opportunity for another in need.

I envision a future where medical services are provided because they are necessary and effective, not just because they will be paid for;

A system and a people that acknowledge that the presence of a want does not equate with the existence of a need;

A system that tends to the sick but does not pander to the frivolous, nor enrich the greedy;

A system that acknowledges futility but does not abandon hope, and that recognizes the dignity of the human condition;

A system in which limited tangible resources are augmented with limitless compassion.

We will have a system that recognizes the magic within the therapeutic relationship, but does not waste valuable resources on the whimsical, the fashionable, or the fraudulent.

We will have a system that competes to return functioning people to their homes, their workplaces, and their schools instead of competing to maximize the revenues of a health care industry.

We *must* have a system in which a patient can disclose his or her most intimate secrets without fear that those will be used against his or her interests, or for the personal profit of another.

In our system, those given the privilege of serving the sick are permitted to do so by virtue of the good they can do, not by the strength of their lobbies, nor the sophistication of their marketing.

I do not think we will have to look far or wait long for this future. It exists already in our better collective senses. It is what we would have for our children, for our parents, and for ourselves. Let us therefore gauge proposed reforms against these principles and others like them. If we can generate a collective vision of where we would like to go, surely we can make it happen.

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**The author** was supported by a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellowship. The views expressed here reflect a personal response to the health policy issues debated during the recent 105th Congress of the United States. They are not intended to represent the positions or opinions of any individual, office, or organization with which the author has been associated.

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**Edited by** Roxanne K. Young, Associate Editor.