



Getting what we deserve: Health and medical care in America

Alfred Sommer

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Abstract

One of America's leading public health experts finds a host of ills in this country's health care system: " The United States spends nearly twice as much on health care as the rest of the developed world, yet has higher infant mortality rates and shorter longevity than most nations. " We have access to many different drugs that accomplish the same end at varying costs, and nearly all are cheaper abroad. " Our life span had doubled over the past century before we developed effective drugs to treat most diseases or even considered altering the human genome. " The benefits of almost all newly developed treatments are marginal, while their costs are high. In his blunt assessment of the state of public health in America, Alfred Sommer argues that human behavior has a stronger effect on wellness than almost any other factor. Despite exciting advances in genomic research and cutting-edge medicine, Sommer explains, most illness can be avoided or managed with simple, low-tech habits such as proper hand washing, regular exercise, a balanced diet, and not smoking. But, as he also shows, this is easier said than done. Sommer finds that our fascination with medical advances sometimes keeps us from taking responsibility for our individual well-being. Instead of focusing on prevention, we wait for medical science to cure us once we become sick. Humorous, sometimes acerbic, and always well informed, Sommer's thought-provoking book will change the way you look at health care in America.

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Medical care

Public health

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 Costs SOCIAL SCIENCES	 Infant mortality SOCIAL SCIENCES
 Life-span SOCIAL SCIENCES	 Health Care System SOCIAL SCIENCES

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- The United States spends nearly twice as much on health care as the rest of the developed world, yet has higher infant mortality rates and shorter longevity than most nations.
- Health care in the United States is provided by many distinct organizations. Health care facilities are largely owned and operated by private sector businesses. 58% of community hospitals in the United States are non-profit, 21% are government-owned, and 21% are for-profit. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the United States spent \$9,403 on health care per capita, and 17.1% on health care as percentage of its GDP in 2014. Healthcare coverage is provided through a combination of private Includes bibliographical references (p. 123-125) and index. Genesis : from few to many-in fits and starts -- Disease is the sum of all evils -- Genes : sometimes "destiny," sometimes not -- The complex nature of causality -- The consequences of our own behavior -- Choosing the healthier lifestyle -- From science to policy : the path is anything but linear -- The U.S. Health care system -- Who's healthy? Who's not? Why? The great cost of medical care in the country and a great number of people who could not pay for it forced the federal government to develop two programs — Medicaid and Medicare. Medicaid, started in 1966, is a federal-state program providing free medical care for the poor and aged, for the blind and dependent children. Medicare, started in 1967, is a federal program providing free or discounted medical care for aged Americans over 65. In the United States, the Department of Health and Human Services is the executive committee of the United States government. This department was created in 195