

Medicare Maladies

A Series that Exposes the Dangerous Elements of the Medicare Bill currently in Committee

MM #68: The Road To Health-Care Serfdom Starts Here

“House and Senate negotiators said on Monday that they had reached a tentative agreement on one of the most important issues in the Medicare bill. Under the agreement, the government would guarantee the availability of prescription drug benefits in any market where private insurers fail to do so.” – *The New York Times*, Oct. 21.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, starts America’s march toward a national health-care system that offers less quality and fewer choices. How? Like this, according to Heritage Foundation health-care expert Robert Moffit:

Lawmakers see the government guarantee here as a “safety net” to catch the Medicare patients that private insurance companies can’t—or won’t—cover. But insurance companies would view the scheme differently. They could see it as a reason not to assume any risk and not take Medicare patients at all. This would mean that the government, by law, would take over the delivery of prescription drugs to seniors, and determine the quality of their drug coverage.

What lawmakers should do, Moffit says, is target the prescription drug benefit to those who need it. Contrary to public belief, about three out of four seniors already have prescription drug coverage, many of which get it through former employers. But right now, under this proposal, anybody turning age 65—including a retiring Bill Gates or Martha Stewart—would be handed a taxpayer-financed drug benefit. This isn’t right. Congress should change course.

Read more about how to offer drugs through Medicare the right way at heritage.org.

For more information or to receive an e-mail version of “Medicare Maladies,” contact medicaremaladies@heritage.org or call Heritage Media Services at (202) 675-1761.

(“Medicare Maladies” is a regular feature, launched 7/14/03, from The Heritage Foundation. Sad to say, there’s another malady coming your way tomorrow. Daily “maladies” are also available on heritage.org.)