

Medicare Maladies

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

MM #80: Don't Call The Coroner Yet

A key Democratic senator says a proposal that would allow Medicare to offer prescription drugs to all of its patients, regardless of income or need, is “on life support.”

Sen. Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts, the Democrats' senior authority on health care issues, said negotiations on the bill were “on life support” and in danger of dying within weeks, *The New York Times* reported Nov. 6.

The Heritage Foundation has a second opinion. We believe there's a way to save this “patient”—using methods that have been in use for 43 years.

It's called the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program or FEHBP. It's available to more than 8 million federal retirees, workers, members of Congress (including Kennedy) and their families. It offers at least a dozen plans across the country and prescription drug coverage. Plus, more health plans are available in the states through the FEHBP program in addition to the national health plan offerings. The House uses FEHBP as a reform model, but not until 2010.

Heritage believes that by modeling Medicare on the FEHBP program, it would be possible for Medicare patients to get the prescription drugs they need without robbing taxpayers blind as the 77-million baby boomer generation prepares for retirement. The talks among lawmakers about the Medicare bill have been long. But they're not over yet—no matter what Kennedy thinks.

Find out more about FEHBP as a Medicare reform model 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.)