

Debate

The Great Healthcare Debate

ISSUE: Is healthcare a right or a privilege?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, proclaims “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one’s family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care.” Hard work and healthy living do not assure being healthy. With the high costs of healthcare, many consumers cannot afford health insurance. The U.S. government is following other industrialized nations in adopting universal healthcare.

Critics argue it is the individual’s responsibility, not the government’s, to ensure personal health. Many health problems, such as obesity and diabetes, can often be prevented by individuals choosing to live healthier lifestyles. Another concern involves the cost of healthcare. Critics believe universal health insurance will increase costs because more people will depend upon the government for healthcare. This in turn might cause costs to be passed onto consumers and prompt the government to limit certain types of care. Guaranteeing healthcare for all may lead people to make riskier decisions because they know if they get hurt, they are guaranteed healthcare coverage.

There are two sides to every issue:

- 1. Because healthcare protects life, it is a fundamental right and should therefore be ensured by the federal government.*
- 2. Healthcare is a privilege and should not be provided by the government because of the high costs involved.*

**This debate issue was developed by O. C. Ferrell and Linda Ferrell © 2021. This case was prepared for classroom discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative, ethical, or legal decision by management. All sources used for this case were obtained through publicly available material.*