

# SICKO

## FACTS ABOUT HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

- The United States is the only industrialized country in the world without a universal health insurance system.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2006, the U.S. census reported that 46 million Americans (recently revised downward to 45 million) have no health insurance.<sup>2</sup>
- “Over a third (36%) of families living below the poverty line are uninsured. Hispanic Americans (34%) are more than twice as likely to be uninsured as white Americans, (13%) while 21% of black Americans have no health insurance.”<sup>3</sup>
- More than 9 million children lack health insurance in America.<sup>4</sup>
- Eighteen thousand people die each year because they are uninsured.<sup>5</sup>
- According to the UN Human Development Report, “The uninsured are less likely to have regular outpatient care, so they are more likely to be hospitalized for avoidable health problems. Once in hospital, they receive fewer services and are more likely to die in the hospital than are insured patients. They also receive less preventive care. Over 40% of the uninsured do not have a regular place to go when they are sick and over a third of the uninsured say that they or someone in their family went without needed care, including recommended treatments or prescription drugs in the last year, because of cost.”<sup>6</sup>
- Half of all bankruptcies are caused by medical bills. Three-quarters of those filings are people with health insurance.<sup>7</sup>
- U.S. health care spending is approximately \$2 trillion per year, or \$6,697 per person.<sup>8</sup> The United States continues to spend significantly more on health care than other countries in the world.<sup>9</sup>
- Administrative costs account for 31 percent of all health care expenditures in the United States. The average overhead for U.S. private health insurers is 11.7 percent; for Medicare, it is 3.6 percent; for Canada’s national health insurance program, it is 1.3 percent.<sup>10</sup>
- According to the UN Human Development Report, while the United States leads the world in spending on health care, “countries spending substantially less than the US have

healthier populations.... The infant mortality rate for the U.S. is now higher than for many other industrial countries.”<sup>11</sup>

- A baby born in El Salvador has a better chance of surviving than a baby in Detroit. The infant mortality rate in Detroit is 15.5, compared to El Salvador's rate of 9.7.<sup>12</sup>
- Canadians live three years longer on average than we do.<sup>13</sup>
- A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that older Americans are significantly less healthy than their British counterparts - we have more diabetes, heart attacks, strokes, lung disease and cancer. Even the poorest Brits can expect to live longer than the richest Americans.<sup>14</sup>
- Cubans have a lower infant mortality rate than the United States and according to the U.N. Human Development Report, a longer average lifespan.<sup>15</sup>
- Over the next decade, the federal government will give the drug and health care industries an estimated \$822 billion as a result of the 2003 enactment of Medicare Part D (the Medicare prescription drug plan).<sup>16</sup>
- There are four times as many health care lobbyists in Washington as there are members of Congress.<sup>17</sup>
- Ninety percent of Americans believe the American health care system needs fundamental changes or needs to be completely rebuilt. Two-thirds of Americans believe the federal government should guarantee universal health care for all citizens.<sup>18</sup>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> *The Impact of Health Insurance Coverage on Health Disparities in the United States*, Human Development Report, UNDP, 2005; *Universal Health Insurance in the United States: Reflections on the Past, the Present, and the Future*. American Journal of Public Health; <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1447684>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p60-231.pdf> This figure was recently revised downward to 44.8 million due to a computer programming error.

<sup>3</sup> *The Impact of Health Insurance Coverage on Health Disparities in the United States*, Human Development Report, UNDP, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> *The Great Divide: When Kids Get Sick, Insurance Matters*, Families USA Publication No. 07-102, February 2007.

<sup>5</sup> *Insuring America's Health: Principles and Recommendations*, Institute of Medicine, January 2004.

<http://www.iom.edu/?id=19175>

<sup>6</sup> *The Impact of Health Insurance Coverage on Health Disparities in the United States*, Human Development Report, UNDP, 2005

<sup>7</sup> "Illness and Injury as Contributors to Bankruptcy," Himmelstein et al, *Health Affairs*, February 2, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Catlin, A, C. Cowan, S. Heffler, et al, "National Health Spending in 2005." *Health Affairs* 26:1 (2006).

<sup>9</sup> OECD, in *Figures 2006-2007 Health Spending and Resources*.

<http://ocde.p4.siteinternet.com/publications/doi/files/012006061T02.xls>.

<sup>10</sup> Steffie Woolhandler, M.D., M.P.H., Terry Campbell, M.H.A., and David U. Himmelstein, M.D., *Costs of Health Care Administration*, *N Engl J Med* 2003;349:768-75.

<sup>11</sup> *The Impact of Health Insurance Coverage on Health Disparities in the United States*, Human Development Report, UNDP, 2005.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.infantmortprogram.org/stats.asp>

<sup>13</sup> World Health Organization, 2004 statistics.

<sup>14</sup> James Banks, PhD; Michael Marmot, MD; Zoe Oldfield, MSc; James P. Smith, PhD, "Disease and Disadvantage in the United States and in England" *JAMA* 2006; 295:2037-2045; Alan Cowell, "Study Says Older Americans Are Less Healthy Than British," *New York Times*, May 3, 2006

<sup>15</sup> UN Human Development Report, 2006. <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/pdfs/report/HDR06-complete.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Congressional Budget Office, <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/77xx/doc7731/01-24-BudgetOutlook.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Opensecrets.org (registered health/drug industry lobbyists)

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/CBSNews\\_polls/health\\_care.pdf](http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/CBSNews_polls/health_care.pdf)