

Truths about health care rationing

Tom Gallagher | Aug. 18, 2009 NCR Today

The Financial Times columnist Philip Stephens offers a [clear-headed comparison](#) [1] of the British National Health Service versus the U.S. private health care insurance system. His fundamental view is this: In both countries health care is rationed by rationing access and that what separates systems is efficiency and equity. He says that President Obama's opponents' claim that the National Health Service is state sponsored euthanasia is "palpable nonsense."

Stephens points out that 8 percent that U.S. taxpayers pony up to pay for the U.S. government health system, Medicaid and Medicare, is "only a fraction less than the proportion of its income that Britain spends on the entire National Health System. By this measure, U.S. health care is as 'socialized' as any in Europe."

While U.S. patients get the benefit of advanced technologies and medicines, we live shorter lives than other rich countries. As a result, all the money we spend hasn't improved outcomes.

"That the world's richest country can spend so much and still lag so far behind the best is an extraordinary indictment," Stephens writes. "But Mr. Obama's critics are throwing stones from a glass house in which the panes are already broken."

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[1] <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f6ad0b18-8b59-11de-9f50-00144feabdc0.html>