

Powerful Patient 2009 week 2

Host: Joyce Graff, WebTalkRadio.net

Holiday Wish List – Health Care for All

Joyce Graff speaks with T. L. Kittle about her current editorial, “Holiday Wish-List: Quality Health Care for all Americans”, which outlines some actions that the incoming Obama administration could take that help clear away the obstacles for patients who are trying to get medical care as well as for the physicians who want to help them.



T.L. Kittle

1) About Our Guest

T. L. Kittle works in the entertainment industry in Los Angeles. In 2004, while in the midst of writing and directing her first feature film, Kittle was bitten by a tick. Soon afterward, she began experiencing strange health symptoms which led her crashing into the United States health care system.

Fairly conservative with an idealistic vision of the practice of medicine, she had no idea the degree to which the medical industry was malfunctioning for both patients and the physicians who are trying to help them until it was almost too late.

2) About the Wish List

Kittle discusses in depth the conflict between health care and a for-profit sick care system. Saving someone’s life often isn’t profitable, yet in any health care system saving lives should be the highest priority. Many of those who are ill are not able to work, putting them in a position where they need more resources than they are able to put back into the system—making these people inherently not profitable. Therefore, the health insurance companies have built an entire infrastructure for denying or delaying medical care to the sick when they need it. (“prior authorization”, “experimental”, “outside of current standards of care”, etc.)

In order to help maintain this hold on profit, our current system has linked health insurance strongly into the employment system, which excludes a large percentage of the people who need it the most—those who are too ill to work.

Currently, there are millions of Americans and corporations paying their health insurance premiums with the belief that the health insurance company will be there for them when they become ill—only to find themselves either dropped from their coverage when they become sick or they can’t afford the COBRA payments now that they are too ill to

work—after having paid premiums larger than what other people pay in taxes for a national health care system in other countries.

For the full text of the editorial, see

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUS241936+19-Dec-2008+PRN20081219>

3) About the current U.S. Healthcare system

Even those who are ‘fortunate’ to have private health insurance, often don’t receive the health care they need when they need it, due to current business practices the health insurance companies are allowed to utilize. Once upon a time, people were allowed to hire five-year-old children to work in factories until better ethical standards were put into place. Kittle argues that a stronger ethical platform needs to be implemented in the current health care system, one that actually supports providing people with the medical services they need when they need it without hassle or delay—something most patients in the current system have never experienced.

Often the argument that people in other countries often experience “wait times” for certain procedures is used as a rationale for why our medical system is better. Kittle says that is nonsense—“in this country, there is no waiting for thousands of people—there is no getting it, period.” And those who point to “you can go to the ER,” Kittle responds that there is a tremendous amount of health care that a patient needs that is not given in an emergency room. There are those patients in the U.S. who wait (length of time dependent on the quality of insurance), then after waiting still have to pay hundreds or thousands out of their own pocket in order to get the care that they need. Not to mention all the hospitals and doctors a patient can’t see because they’re not within their network. How does any of this add up to having great access to medical care?

Kittle doesn’t ignore that many people receive great medical care in the United States -- especially people who can afford to pay cash -- it’s that most people do not. Kittle believes those who can afford the bells and whistles should be able to receive them—the problem is that the United States needs to bring up the bottom. There should not be people going without health care at all. Therefore, it’s time to develop a new system that actually does what a health care system is supposed to do—take care of all its people.

4) References

For our previous conversation with Kittle, see:

Pitfalls on the Road to Diagnosis

http://www.powerfulpatient.org/archive/2008/08x_pitfalls_in_diagnosis.ph

For more information about the Blue Diamond Foundation:

<http://www.bluediamondfoundation.org>

Kittle encourages anyone with questions or ideas to contact her at:

tkittle@bluediamondfoundation.org