

Unalienable Right

Category: Health Care on the Line

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | July 1, 2017

The Declaration of Independence endows all of us with “certain unalienable Rights...among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” An ill person who lacks medical support does not have the wherewithal to pursue happiness. An ill person who is denied health care due to prohibitive costs does not possess liberty. Most fundamentally, a government that deprives its citizens of affordable health care profoundly undermines the life of those citizens.

I do not consider myself a sickly person, but I have experienced many health issues resulting in hospitalizations and complications: hemorrhaging after a routine tonsillectomy; reacting negatively to an anesthetic that kept me unconscious for three days after the removal of four impacted wisdom teeth; enduring two emergency trips to the hospital following a hysterectomy; suffering through four unsuccessful jaw/joint surgeries. My physical problems have caused me pain, but at least I did not have to deal with the financial pain of high medical bills. My family and I have always had health insurance; we have always emerged economically intact from my hospitalizations.

I recently received a huge bill—thousands of dollars—due to an infusion of Reclast, a medicine for osteoporosis. The hospital where I had the infusion sent the wrong insurance numbers to my provider. After multiple phone calls, I straightened out the problem—or so I thought. Then I got a bill saying that my insurance company had denied the claim. More phone calls led to the realization that my insurance company, located in one state, was having technical problems dealing with out-of-state claims, including mine. It took a whole year, but the claim was eventually resolved, leaving me with only a minimal co-pay.

I do not want people to receive a bill for thousands of dollars without the recourse I had. I do not want people suffering because a physician will not treat the uninsured. I do not want parents having to decide between feeding and clothing their children versus providing them with health care.

I confess I do not understand the intricacies of Obamacare or whatever plans the Republicans are currently trying to write. I do recognize, however, that everyone—no matter that person’s gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or race—deserves some kind of health-care coverage. We need health care to have a quality of life that allows us to enjoy our liberty and to pursue happiness.

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