Health Care Rationing

“A death sentence for the very ill, the very old, and the very unfortunate”

Melissa Garrett, MD
General Surgery Grand Rounds, April 11, 2011
“Bring out your dead”
Definition

- When some people need care and do not receive it
  - Supply and demand
  - Transplanted organs
  - Ability to pay
  - End of Life
• 12% of the population is 65 years or older
• By the year 2030, that figure is expected to reach 21%
ABILITY TO PAY

- Economically defined: Limiting to who can afford to pay.
  - 15% of the American population

- Regulatory means: Restricting from even those who can afford to pay.
  - 85% of the American population
• Nationalized health care puts bureaucrats - not doctors - in charge of deciding who needs what medical treatment.
President Obama has noted that U.S. healthcare is rationed based on income, type of employment, and pre-existing medical conditions, with nearly 46 million uninsured. He states that millions of Americans are denied coverage or face higher premiums as a result of pre-existing medical conditions.
CANADA

MEDIAN WAIT TIMES:

- Specialist physician > 4 weeks
- Diagnostic services (MRI and CT scans) > 2 weeks
- Surgery > 4 weeks

- Dr. Brian Day was once quoted as saying "This is a country in which dogs can get a hip replacement in under a week and in which humans can wait two to three years."
THINGS ARE LOOKING UP, LOIS YOU'RE NEXT IN LINE FOR RADIATION THERAPY
YOU KNOW THAT HEART SURGERY YOU WERE WAITING FOR?

GOOD NEWS, PHIL. A HOSPITAL BED JUST OPENED UP

MORE EVIDENCE OF A HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN CRISIS
• In its 2000 assessment of world health care systems, the World Health Organization found that France provided the "best overall health care" in the world.

• In 2005, France spent 11.2% of GDP on health care (US $3,926) per capita

• Universal Health Care

• 77% of health expenditures are covered by government
• Physicians reimbursed at lower rate
• medical school is paid for by the state = No student loan debt
• malpractice insurance premiums are 1-2% of US costs
• French government pays two-thirds of the social security tax for most French physicians—a tax that's typically 40% of income.
Great Britain

- “NICE” (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)
- has set a **general limit** of about $49,000 on the cost of extending life for a year.
- If the treatment costs more and only gives patients on average 11 months of life, you are out of luck.
“Significant” or “Sufficient”: Patient sees progress but not enough to justify the “cost-benefit” ratio set by the government.

“Outweigh the Risks”: Every drug has risks but this drug costs too much.

“Sufficient Benefits”: Once again, patient sees progress but not enough for our liking.
Avastin

• does not “does not significantly prolong life.”
Cases

• 1. Judy – Coma 3mo
• 2. Brian Cressler – Coma 18mo
• 3. Patricia White Bull – unresponsive 16yrs
• 4. Rich Sprenkle

• Peter Singer wrote for the *New York Times Magazine* in July 2009 that healthcare is rationed in the United States: [9]


