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Ensuring America's Health: The Public Creation Of The Corporate Health Care System



Synopsis

Ensuring America's Health explains why the US health care system offers world-class medical services to some patients but is also exceedingly costly with fragmented care, poor distribution, and increasingly bureaucratized processes. Based on exhaustive historical research, this work traces how public and private power merged to favor a distinctive economic model that places insurance companies at the center of the system, where they both finance and oversee medical care. Although the insurance company model was created during the 1930s, it continues to drive health care cost and quality problems today. This wide-ranging work not only evaluates the overarching political and economic framework of the medical system but also provides rich narrative detail, examining the political dramas, corporate maneuverings, and forceful personalities that created American health care as we know it. This book breaks new ground in the fields of health care history, organizational studies, and American political economy.

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Customer Reviews

"Christy Chapin's Ensuring America's Health changes the scholarly conversation about the history of our health care system. It explains how both public and private forces created Medicare in 1965 and how the 'insurance company model' of health care finance has prevailed ever since. This book is the best treatment we have of the historical dimensions of our current health care crisis and will prove to be an indispensable resource for historians and policy makers." Edward Berkowitz, George Washington University
"A brilliant history of America's extended and expensive experience with the

insurance company model of health care. Read it!" Louis Galambos, Johns Hopkins University "Ensuring America's Health: The Public Creation of the Corporate Health Care System is an important history of how US health care came to be dominated by the private insurance industry. Through impressive research and argumentation, Christy Ford Chapin examines how the 'insurance company model' rose to prominence and eventually to actual governance of health care consumers and practitioners ... [this book] is an essential contribution to the historiography of the US health care system and will be of great interest to historians of medicine, policy, and business." Beatriz Hoffman, The American Historical Review

This book provides an in-depth evaluation of the U.S. health care system's development in the twentieth century. It shows how a unique economic design - the insurance company model - came to dominate health care, bringing with it high costs; corporate medicine; and fragmented, poorly distributed care.

The writing is great, well researched and scholarly. BUT the formatting of the ebook is not good, with awkward page breaks, weird paragraph or line breaks and terrible formatting of the footnotes. The awkward formatting makes it difficult to read. Probably some glitch in the digitization or Kindle app that could be easily fixed.

A brilliant review of the history of medical practices and how they evolved from cash based practices to insurance based practices.

Many scholars have written about the failure of health care reform in the United States but, there is an absence of literature on the actual American health care system. Christy Ford Chapin's *Ensuring America's Health: The Public Creation of the Corporate Health Care System* helps fill this void in historical scholarship. Not only is *Ensuring America's Health* a contribution to historical and policy scholarship but, is highly recommended for readers who want to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the American health care system. In *Ensuring America's Health*, Historian Christy Ford Chapin chronicles the historical development of insurance companies controlling the delivery and financing of health care. Through a well-written and persuasive argument, Chapin shows that interactions between the public and private sectors led to insurance companies becoming responsible for the delivery and financing of health care. In addition, that the

Chapin's "insurance-company model" explains the costly and fragmented American health care system. The characters in Chapin's historical narrative are the American Medical Association, commercial insurers, non-profit plans (Blue Cross and Blue Shield), and federal policymakers. Chapin provides a detailed analysis of the structure, ideology, and political strategy of the AMA, commercial insurers, and non-profit plans. Most significantly, Chapin sheds a new light on the AMA. Since it is well-known that that AMA consistently opposed health care reform due to fears of "socialized medicine," it has been assumed that the AMA was pro-free market. However, Chapin shows that this is not the case because they opposed and defeated other models of providing health care because they feared losing their professional autonomy to third-party financiers. The AMA eventually embraced health insurance because they feared federal government intervention, but the AMA dictated the particular model of health insurance. The evolution of the dominance of the "insurance-company model" was built up through a combination of indirect and direct actions by the federal government and the inefficiency of the model itself. In reaction to federal policymakers' calls for health care reform, insurers and physicians response was to show that there was no need for federal government intervention but, the private sector could provide medical coverage for Americans. With the passage of Medicare, Chapin argues that this legitimized the "insurance-company model" for the program would be administered by insurers. While many scholars have claimed that health costs became a problem after the passage of Medicare, Chapin shows that this is incorrect. The "insurance-company-model" was instantly recognized as costly by federal policymakers. In addition, by the 1950s, these inefficiencies propelled insurers to implement various cost-containment measures, which augmented their status to overseeing the delivery and financing of health care.

First let me say that I haven't read Chapin's book. I did read her op-ed in the New York Times, an essay that made a lot of claims about a faceless, manipulative, nearly omnipotent AMA stacking the deck on insurance programs and lifting the medical licenses and blocking hospital privileges of doctors who didn't toe the line - all without a single citation to allow fact-checking. Now this was an op-ed in a mass market paper so those details might be too much to ask, so I thought I'd buy the book and do some fact-checking. Back in the day (early 80s) when DRGs were enacted to rein in Medicare spending I gave some talks to medical manufacturing groups that included a brief history of the evolution of health care financing, but my prep didn't uncover this heavy an AMA hand. Did I

miss it? Or is Ms. Chapin finding a favored demon lurking under every bush? The fact is I don't know. I'm not giving that talk anymore so I'm not inclined to spend \$100 to find out. But on the strength of her op-ed, I would read her book with an abundantly critical eye.

This book says it explains how healthcare prices have become as high as they are today and why. Now, I'm going to go read a book about how the price for higher education has become so stupid high as it is today and why.

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