

FIXING THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM:

**Kids first – we can’t afford to wait.**

When I think about health care reform, this story motivates me. A young mother came to see me with bronchitis. On her way out, she apologetically asked me to examine her son’s lungs. When I asked

if her son had access to a regular doctor, her scared eyes told me – even before she said the words – that he didn’t. While her

job provided insurance for herself, she couldn’t afford his coverage. Covering him would cost more than her net earnings.

As a family physician, I see more and more parents struggling to afford health insurance for their kids. Many parents who receive coverage for themselves through their jobs say they wish they could substitute their children as the ones who receive care – but this is not possible.

These stories from OHSU patients motivated me to conduct a national

study of uninsured children, which was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association last October. Our data revealed that among the 9 million uninsured children across the United States, nearly one-quarter had parents with private insurance.

When working families cannot afford health care insurance for their kids, we know our system is broken. If children can’t access basic health care, they may suffer a lifetime of avoidable health conditions. The quality of their lives is diminished. And we all suffer from their lost potential and missed opportunities.

Oregon’s governor, legislators and many others are working to give more Oregon children a chance for a healthy future. If we all work together, that goal is within reach.



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Third in a series.  
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