

FIXING THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: A time to focus on the goal.

Lately, the topic of health care reform has become an even more central part of our national discussion. In all types of forums – national, regional and local –

people are engaged, evaluating the pros and cons of many competing federal proposals.

Overall, this attention is positive. A vigorous debate is a good thing. But as policymakers and citizens delve more deeply into the issues and the politics around federal health care reform, we must hold one idea above all the others: Inaction is not an option. Disagreement cannot be an excuse for doing nothing. Finding consensus won't be easy – it never is – but the status quo is not sustainable.

This is a good time to take a step back and refocus on our goals. Amid all the proposals, how will we recognize a real solution? First, there's the issue

of access. Successful reform must give everyone access to a defined set of benefits – including those that keep people well. It also must make sure that we train enough healthcare professionals to provide that care.

Reform must also identify and implement ways to keep costs down. And finally, quality must continue to be improved. That means using evidence-based medicine, an area where OHSU has helped lead the way.

Ultimately, we need a system where everyone has fair access to affordable health care, where costs are better controlled and outcomes are improved. How we get there is not as important – as long as we get there. If we stay focused on those goals, the solution is within reach.


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Eighth in a series.
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