

Book Reviews

Healthcareconomics 101: Five Hundred Ways You're Being Ripped Off by the Health Insurance and Health Care Industries. Any Questions? by Kevin Wacasey, M.D., softcover, 152 pp, \$14.99, ISBN-13: 978-1546485520, EightSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.

This book is a compilation of the insights that Dr. Wacasey accumulated over two decades of medical practice, as well as from looking back on his childhood, when his mother whipped out her checkbook to pay \$30 for frequent visits to the pediatrician. He dedicates the book "To the Colossal House of Cards that is the Great American Health Care Dilemma" for making this work possible.

It is an unusual format, really a collection of Dr. Wacasey's best Twitter tweets, good for some laughs on an airplane ride, and ideal to put in your reception area. It should help a generation with the attention span of a tweet to understand the obvious, which is generally being buried in a lot of rhetoric from the mainstream media, politicians, and even our most prestigious medical publications.

Here are some of my favorites:

Once upon a time

"As an ER doctor, I got yelled at by my employer for not doing 'enough' tests and treatments. Because they were only able to bill every patient I saw an average of almost \$4,600." Dr. Wacasey includes a redacted physician productivity report.

Paid in full

A neighbor: "You don't take health insurance? So how do you get paid for your services?"

Me: "Oh, I take cash, credit cards, and local checks. Sometimes chickens, if the patient has a tasty recipe."

Isn't it obvious?

A business owner from down the street: "Why don't you take health insurance?"

Me: "Would you?"

Healthcareconomics 101

"Pharmacy benefit management

(PBM) companies don't do anything except negotiate prices between drug manufacturers and pharmacies. Yet the industry generates hundreds of billions of dollars in annual revenue. ANY QUESTIONS?"

How Can They Get Away with It?

"Restaurant, hotel, and bowling alley chains don't form exclusive 'networks.' Your dollar is good and welcome at all locations.

"So why do health insurance companies need to form exclusive 'provider networks'?"

Why Managed Care?

"Managed care began when the health insurance industry made doctors and other health care providers an offer they couldn't refuse.

"Join our network or your business will die"

Obviously, this is a book of short aphorisms, not an in-depth analysis, but very often to ask the question is to answer it. I think it will get a lot of people to think.

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Discrimination and Disparities, by Thomas Sowell, hardcover, 165 pp, \$19.04, ISBN 978-1-5416-4562-2, New York, Basic Books, 2018.

In his latest book, Thomas Sowell addresses an inane and dominant leftist narrative that he properly calls the invincible fallacy—that inequalities among groups are the product of evil factors, malign conduct, racism, and discrimination. He takes down that myth piece by piece, brick by brick.

Sowell is a former Marxist, who espouses free-market capitalism as only a former Marxist can. His books have devastated the Marxist canon of nonsense, showing that Marxism ignores basic human nature and reality

in its constant pounding for a utopian egalitarian solution to inequalities. As Sowell points out in all his writings, leftists might do well to look at the evidence and the realities that explain the reasons for their repeated failures and catastrophes in efforts to create the communist utopia.

Sowell presents compelling evidence that the disparities existing between and within different cultures throughout the world, and even within the United States, are not solely or even primarily the result of discrimination or oppression by the capitalist boogeyman. Rather, they are the result of real-world differences in circumstances and human choices.

In analyzing examples of inequality, he writes, researchers fail to incorporate factors that produce differences. Then they tend to automatically make the uninformed assumption that inequality of outcomes is due to malign conduct by "oppressors" or "racists" or others who might be labeled as exploiters.

Sowell points out the errors of omission and of commission, and shows how they lead to false conclusions. Statist advocates of utopian solutions frequently charge ahead with no effort to avoid fatuous assumptions, substituting good intentions for good sense that avoids "unintended consequences."

Examples of Marxist/socialist/statist nonsense abound in *Discrimination and Disparities*, with complex arguments or conclusions clearly explained. The book is thoroughly referenced for scholars; the references occupy nearly a fourth of the text.

Sowell is aware of the emotional and political factors that are in play in this continuing debate about inequalities. He recognizes the critical problems, and outlines sensible efforts to reduce those disparities that make us so uncomfortable and create so much heat, but not enough light.

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