

# Center for Computer Assisted and Reconstructive Surgery, Inc.

Stephen B. Murphy, M.D.  
*Joint Preserving and  
Reconstructive Surgery  
of the Hip and Knee*

April 7, 2010

RE: Opinion Concerning Healthcare Reform

Dear Patients and your Families,

As you know, Congress and the President have passed a massive bill that aims to reform the healthcare system. While it is true that healthcare costs have been increasing at an unsustainable pace and that prudent reforms are needed, it is my personal opinion that the decisions that our representatives in the Federal Government have made are exceedingly ill-advised.

There are several very simple steps that the government could have taken to improve critical issues in healthcare but instead, they chose yet again to wildly expand the scope of government even further.

The sector of American Society that is expanding at the greatest rate is the Federal Government itself. If there is an urgent need for reform in our society, it is the need to reform our government, or at least to replace those that are dangerously arrogant and naïve (*i.e.* those that voted in favor of the legislation).

Unless citizens take steps to alter the current healthcare “reform” legislation, we will have yet another unsustainable government program that will rival Medicare and Social Security. In addition, logical steps that would have been taken to improve the system will be thwarted and arcane measures to limit and control medical care will inevitably be implemented. Below is a prior letter from the fall of 2009 that summarizes my opinion from that time. My view is unchanged. While it is too late to instill common sense into your elected officials, it is not too late to replace them.

Sincerely,

Stephen B. Murphy, MD

## Center for Computer Assisted and Reconstructive Surgery, Inc.

**Stephen B. Murphy, M.D.**  
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September 9, 2009

RE: Opinion Concerning Healthcare Reform

Dear Patients and your Families,

Many of you who have come to my office recently have been asking about healthcare reform and my feelings about it. Ordinarily, I don't express my private opinions publicly, but this issue is so critical that I feel that it is my responsibility to share my viewpoint with you. As you may know, I've been involved in medicine for more than thirty years and have had the privilege to travel and work in many parts of the world during that time. In addition to practice here in Boston, I've had the experience of providing medical care in several developed (England, Switzerland, Germany) and developing nations as well as domestically as a civilian for the Army, Air Force, and Veterans Administration. As a result, I have the benefit of 1<sup>st</sup> hand knowledge and experience with many healthcare delivery systems.

As you may be aware, large government-driven systems are typically plagued with inefficiencies and my experience with Federal systems of providing medical care confirm that simple fact. It is not surprising that the most expensive and least sustainable aspect of healthcare in the US is that segment that the Federal Government is currently responsible for. It would seem logical then, that the Federal Government would do well to do a better job with its current responsibilities, rather than to assert its control over the segment of healthcare that is solvent.

Among the most concerning aspects of the current healthcare bill is the idea of creating a public option to compete with the private sector. Since the President had openly stated years ago that he supports the goal of the Federal Government taking charge of all of healthcare, it is evident that the public option would effectively be a two-step means for taking over the private sector. Unlike private insurers, the Federal Government can run deficits, and thereby has the power to undercut, overburden, envelop or eventually destroy its competition, thereby easily achieving the ultimate goal of having all of healthcare under Federal Government control. It is easy to imagine a scenario where companies would find the public option a less expensive way to provide healthcare for their employees. If that were the case, millions of individuals who currently enjoy private health insurance would be pushed into a national public healthcare system. To avoid that, some individuals would likely choose to buy health insurance privately.

Unfortunately, recent drafts of the healthcare reform bills propose to

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make it illegal to buy new individual private health insurance policies and so millions of individuals would be trapped in the public system; a system where your insurer would undoubtedly have more control over your health than you and your physicians would.

In addition, there has been a large Government-led push toward mandating electronic medical record keeping. While the efficient management of medical information can improve patient care, the larger question really is who will have access to that information? You may know that insurers may have the right to review your medical records, typically without your knowledge or consent, since they are paying for much of your care. If the Federal Government becomes a more universal insurer and all medical records are electronic, all of your personal medical and pharmaceutical history may be able to be viewed by Federal Government employees without your consent. As a result, **all of the patient privacy laws are pointless if they don't apply to the Federal Government itself.** You may know that electronic copies of personal information, including social security numbers, on 26.5 million patients affiliated with the Veterans Administration were stolen in 2006. Increasing centralization of sensitive medical information does not appear to be a direction in which we should be headed. Additionally concerning is the provision in recent proposals that authorizes the Government to directly withdraw funds from your bank account, without due process, if you do not show documentation of an acceptable medical insurance policy in a timely manner. **I feel that these proposed losses of personal and financial privacy are extreme and am concerned that organizations that ordinarily work to protect civil liberties are silent.**

There certainly are significant problems with all healthcare systems, including ours. Our problems include insurance portability, long-term care, improved preventive care, the high cost of care, and insurance for the uninsured. However, recent drafts of healthcare legislation clearly demonstrate that our current leaders are more interested in seizing control of healthcare than in anything else. In fact, many appear to be afflicted with a dangerous and unprecedented combination of unfounded moral arrogance and profound ignorance of the history of state-controlled healthcare in other industrialized nations. The President himself demonstrated this attitude this evening, reassuring everyone that they could keep their current health insurance while omitting that they intend to prevent people from buying new private individual health insurance if people ever leave a job to start out on their own. Such nationalization by attrition is a deliberate strategy. Such speech that simultaneously reassures and deliberately deceives is reprehensible. **The President's speech is as eloquent as the Pied**

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**Piper's pipe is melodic.** To this point, I returned this past weekend from a medical meeting in Scotland. My colleagues from the United Kingdom, France and Italy were quite vocal about their hope that our country does not go in the direction that theirs have irreversibly gone, where patients have little control over their own health decisions.

In my personal opinion, it would be more prudent for the Federal Government to better manage the sector of healthcare that it is currently managing poorly rather than to undermine the sector of healthcare that works, by and large, better than any other healthcare system in the world. While some of the most inane provisions in the legislation may be curtailed by voices of reason, I feel that the very fact that they have been proposed is profoundly concerning.

If you have concerns about increasing government control of your health and finances, now is the time to express them to your elected representatives.

Stephen B. Murphy, MD