

# US Health Care Insurance: Current Status and Future Vision

## *Submission Deadline January 15, 2008*

*Gordon Schiff, MD*

The Medical Care Section of the American Public Health Association, for which *Medical Care* is the official journal, is pleased to announce a special theme issue focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of our current health insurance systems—a look “under the hood” of how they work and how to better understand and improve them.

Although many factors determine health, disparities in access to high-quality care worsen outcomes for vulnerable populations, including communities of color and those with chronic disease or little money, health insurance status remains a powerful determinant of health care access and outcomes. Despite impressive advances in our understanding of health care delivery mechanisms, the current, fragmented financing and delivery systems work poorly for many.

The goal of this special issue will be to paint a rich picture of US health systems on both micro and macro levels. We seek a blend of quantitative and qualitative empiric research, as well as commentaries on thoughtful, breakthrough ideas for change.

More specifically, we are requesting original scientific manuscripts focusing on such topics as:

- Outcomes related to current financing, including government and private sources, with a particular focus on: (1) access, quality, and cost; (2) disparities; (3) continuity of care; and (4) patient centeredness;
- How current approaches to health care financing affect the organization and delivery of medical care at various levels;
- The scope and consequences of underinsurance and insurance insecurity;
- The economic and public health costs of uninsured and underinsured persons;
- The impact of newer forms of health insurance including high deductible plans, medical savings accounts, consumer cost sharing, “concierge” or retainer medicine, and “consumer directed health care;”
- The value of current and future population-based data sources for monitoring the effectiveness of insurance programs, especially for vulnerable populations;
- The effect of current policies and practices of insurance companies;
- Advantages and disadvantages of state or federal regulation of insurance practices that address such topics as premium rates, profit ratios, and executive compensation;
- How consumer understanding and behaviors relate to health insurance benefits and choices;
- How noncoverage for pre-existing conditions affects consumers and insurers;
- How administrative costs, efficiency, service use, quality, and outcomes in the United States compare with those of other nations;

All manuscripts should be submitted through the Editorial Manager ([www.editorialmanager.com/mdc](http://www.editorialmanager.com/mdc)) by January 15, 2008. When uploading manuscripts for this issue, select “Insurance Theme Issue” as the manuscript type. The accompanying cover letter should request consideration for the special theme issue. Manuscripts should follow the standard formatting requirements described in the instructions to authors, with full reports limited to a maximum of 4000 words. Our usual standards of rigorous peer review will apply.

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Gordon Schiff, MD, Senior Attending Physician, Department of Medicine, Cook County Hospital; and Professor of Medicine, Rush Medical College, Chicago, Illinois.

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Inquiries are welcomed and may be directed to Ms. Sue Houchin, Managing Editor, at [medicalcare@comcast.net](mailto:medicalcare@comcast.net).

### **The Medical Care Section, American Public Health Association**

The Medical Care Section is guided by the definition of public health as what we do collectively as a society to assure conditions in which people can be healthy. Founded over 60 years ago, we are a diverse group of people working to influence policy through research, advocacy, and dissemination of ideas. We are committed to improving the nation's health through practice, research, education, and policy action.

We explore:

- The organization and practice of medical care in the United States and elsewhere; and

- The social, economic, and environmental conditions that influence health.

We advocate for:

- Strengthening and assuring the conditions that preserve and enhance health;
- A medical care system that assures, for all, care of high quality and cultural sensitivity; and
- A medical care system that assures, for all, accessible preventive medicine.

We see this as attainable through:

- Equitable public financing;
- Careful monitoring and feedback of performance; and
- Wise allocation of resources under public leadership.