
Preface

As the United States finds itself strapped with \$16 trillion of debt, future generations of America's physicians can no longer enter their practices and clinics without a sound understanding of health care. In 2012, the total national health-care spending was \$2.9 trillion, and it is expected to continue to increase at similar levels, potentially reaching 20 % of the GDP by 2016. Young doctors and medical students are likely to see a dramatic transformation of the manner in which America offers medical care to its citizens over the course of their careers.

But today, most physicians leave medical school without a sound comprehension of the key issues facing American health care; doctors understand the medicine, but not the policy. It is crucial that those on the front lines of medicine develop a sense of health care's evolution and understand potential directions of change.

An Introduction to Health Policy: A Primer for Medical Students and Physicians is the first of its kind, authored by physician leaders in health policy at major academic policy centers across the United States. This book allows busy physicians and medical students to quickly develop an understanding of the key issues facing American health care. It seeks to efficiently and effectively educate physicians and medical students on the past, present, and potential future issues in health-care policy.

This book is comprised of four sections. In Parts I and II, the reader will be introduced to the basic elements of health care and will become comfortable with essential concepts. Part III focuses on further developing these basic concepts into a "health-care system"—how all of the moving parts come together. Finally, the concluding section focuses on the manner in which health-care policy is created at both the state and federal levels.

Our ultimate goal is for a reader to leave with a balanced understanding of health care in America and the critical importance of health-care policy: physicians equipped to deliver the best possible care to their patients in a changing environment.

Nashville, TN, USA

Manish K. Sethi, MD
William H. Frist, MD

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A Primer for Physicians and Medical Students

Sethi, M.K.; Frist, W.H. (Eds.)

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