

"From Where I Sit ..."

"ObamaCare" ... And Hospitalization Costs



In the political arena of the upcoming election everyone has been talking about "ObamaCare." It has become what most people refer to as a buzzword for what is formally known as "The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act" which was passed by Congress March 21, 2010, signed into federal law by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010, and is now being challenged before the US Supreme Court. The term "ObamaCare" was coined as a negative by opponents and critics of both the Act and the President (hence the negative symbols found in the logo used to depict this notion). However proponents of ObamaCare have embraced the term to mean that President Obama "Cares."

This ambitious plan was intended to provide a host of benefits for the average American such as extending the age that children could remain on their parents insurance, mandatory coverage for pre-existing conditions, and a host of other benefits. Another suggested benefit was the possible reduction in the cost of hospitalization. This caught my eye and has remained of interest to me over the intervening months.

As many of you are aware, since 2004, the General Board of Personnel Services has been continually exploring options and prospects to establish a national hospitalization plan for the ministers and leaders of our church. Thus far, we have exhausted every available alternative in every possible arena to no avail. Should The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act survive Supreme Court review, our remaining hope is that some of the benefits within the plan may make a group such as ours more attractive to a potential public or private insurance provider. But that is a hope for the future.

What is important for this article is the realization of that isolated benefit that caught my attention when this act was first proposed. Although many critics and pundits stated that, if enacted, hospitalization costs would increase, I must now beg to differ based on our experience of the plan for the employees of my department. I have been a General Officer for 10 years and in each of those years our individual insurance rates have increased. To try and minimize the rate of premium increase, we have increased deductibles, copays, and out-of-pocket limits. We have even considered changing providers. And still each year has brought another increase -- until March of this year when we received our annual notice of future premium costs. Just two years since ObamaCare has been signed into law, our hospitalization rates have gone down 9%. without any change in coverages, deductibles, copays or out-of-pocket limits. Needless to say, I was shocked. But then I remembered that this was one of the potential benefits.

This article is not intended to sway your view of this important legislation, whether you are a critic or proponent, the fact remains, at least for me and those covered within my department, that because of ObamaCare the potential for lower rates is being realized. To me it is not important what specific part of the Act caused the decline and I have no way of knowing whether we will experience future reductions. What is important to me is that a benefit promised has been kept. And that is really what it's all about!

Or at least that is the way it looks to me ...

"From Where I Sit "

Tyrone T. Davis, D.Min is the General Secretary of the Board of Personnel Services which sponsors the CME Retirement Plan & Trust

*(Copies of earlier articles may be found on the
Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at www.c-m-e.org)*

