WEILL MEDICAL COLLEGE OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY

MEDICINE, PATIENTS AND SOCIETY II
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

INTRODUCTION TO THE U.S. HEALTH SYSTEM

Lecture Dates & Location:

September 30, 2003  Weill Auditorium (1300 York Avenue, 2nd Floor)
October 7, 2003    Weill Auditorium (1300 York Avenue, 2nd Floor)
October 14, 2003   Weill Auditorium (1300 York Avenue, 2nd Floor)
October 21, 2003   Weill Auditorium (1300 York Avenue, 2nd Floor)

9:45 A.M. – 11:15 A.M.  Lecture
11:15 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.  Commentary & Panel Discussion
FOCUS OF THE COURSE:

The U.S. health care system continues to undergo dramatic changes. The focus of this course is to provide an historical overview of the organization, delivery, and financing of health care in order to understand the origins of our current system of health care and to focus on recurrent concerns such as cost management and quality assessment. In the time allotted, we focus on basic principles of health care policy to provide the student with a better understanding of the problems and the alternatives for managing these problems. This introductory course serves as an essential background to the third-year health policy rotation.

The lectures will identify major problems confronting the system and explore the initiatives that are being implemented to address them. Following the lecture, a panel of experts has been assembled to discuss the topic from the perspective of their position in the health care field. Student participation is expected to enliven the debate.

COURSE READINGS:

A series of articles are provided in lieu of a text. These assigned readings enable the student to gain an appreciation of the way health care is delivered and financed in the U.S. The articles also provide a basis of knowledge for the student to understand better the issues discussed in lecture and by the panelists. All assigned articles are placed on reserve in the Library (hard copy and electronically).

A course packet will contain a glossary of terms for easy reference as well as background material, which will not be discussed in detail in lecture as time constraints do not permit the lecturers to go into as much detail as we would have liked.

FINAL EXAM:

A take home final exam is required to fulfill the requirements of the course. A literature search should be done to address the topic. Websites are acceptable citations. The paper should be no more than 5 typed pages.

Attendance at lecture and panel discussion is mandatory. A sign-in sheet will be made available.
Select one and respond by citing the literature to support your discussion. The essay should be between 5 – 7 pages double spaced.

1) Mrs. Smith, age 72, is on Medicare Part A and B but does not have Medicaid or a Medigap policy. She is hospitalized for a stroke complicated by a deep vein thrombosis of the left leg and a pulmonary embolus. She is in an acute hospital for 70 days. She improves somewhat and is transferred to the skilled nursing facility (SNF) for rehabilitation. She remained in the SNF for 30 days after which she was determined to be disabled and unable to go home. She is sent to a nursing home for custodial care, where she stays for three months. Surprisingly, she improves and is sent home where she continues to receive services from a home care agency. She also has a homemaker come in for 4 hours a day to buy and cook food as well as clean the house. She is on 5 different prescription medications. What services are covered by Medicare? What is Mrs. Smith’s financial obligation?

   In your discussion, review Medicare eligibility criteria as well as services covered by this program. Discuss the financial implications, if any, to the patient for care and services not covered by Medicare.

2) Each year in the U.S., millions of patients are treated and receive excellent medical care. However, it is estimated that 180,000 individuals die each year as a result of physician-caused injuries. Seventy percent of these deaths are a result of errors and are theoretically preventable. Given the evidence of uneven quality of care, discuss possible components of high quality care. Discuss factors contributing to uneven quality.
3) Vulnerable populations face special problems in dealing with the complexities of our fragmented health care delivery system, creating impediments to timely and effective care. Persistent differences in health status, utilization, and outcomes exist among racial/ethnic groups, among age groups, and between the sexes. Discuss the implications of the lack of access to health care services on health status. Select one specific cohort as an example.

4) Managed care was designed to generate significant savings. Despite efforts to control health care costs, health care expenditures continue to rise at rates exceeding general inflation. What factors are contributing to this increase? What are the implications of uncontrolled cost increases?
INTRODUCTION TO THE U.S. HEALTH SYSTEM

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Date: September 30, 2003

Time: Lecture 9:45 – 11:15 A.M.; Commentary & Panel Discussion: 11:15 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

Lecture 1: The Changing U.S. Health Care System
Lecturer: Madelon L. Finkel, Ph.D., Professor of Clinical Public Health and Course Director

Location: Weill Auditorium (1300 York Avenue, 2nd Floor)

This introductory lecture will present an historical overview of the issues, solutions, and problems that have defined, and continue to define, the organization, delivery, and financing of health care in the United States. Themes of this lecture include cost, quality, and access. The evolution of the U.S. health care system from an inefficient and costly delivery system to one of a business oriented, cost management system is presented. Focus is on how changes in the health care system over time has affected physicians, consumers, and insurers. Obviously in 75 minutes we cannot to into any depth, but handouts and assigned articles should provide supplementary information.

Commentary
Moderator: Alvin I. Mushlin, M.D., Sc.M.
Chairman, Department of Public Health; Chief-of-Service, New York-Weill Cornell Center of New York-Presbyterian Hospital

Topic: How is the public health care system coping with managed care and rising health care costs?

Panelist(s): Van Dunn, M.D., MPH, Vice President, Medical & Professional Affairs, New York City Health & Hospitals Corporation

Assigned articles:
INTRODUCTION TO THE U.S. HEALTH SYSTEM

Date: October 7, 2003

Time: Lecture 9:45 – 11:15 A.M.; Commentary & Panel Discussion: 11:15 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

Lecture 2: What Kind of System Do We Want? How Do We Get There?
Lecturer: Oliver Fein, M.D., Associate Dean/Network Affairs; Professor of Clinical Public Health, Weill Medical College of Cornell University

Location: Weill Auditorium (1300 York Avenue, 2nd Floor)

This lecture focuses on the three dominant modes of health insurance in the U.S. today (Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurances) and modes of provider reimbursement are reviewed. Financial barriers to care highlight the uninsured and the under-insured populations. Review of managed Medicaid and Medicare initiatives such as state CHIP programs and Medicare + Choice are explained. Themes of access, cost, and quality are discussed. Discussion also focuses on options for health care reform; ie, market-driven versus national health insurance. The themes include financing health care, health care costs, international comparisons, and health care policies.

Commentary
Moderator: Alvin I. Mushlin, M.D., Sc.M., Chairman, Department of Public Health; Chief-of-Service, New York-Weill Cornell Center of New York-Presbyterian Hospital

Topic: How is the private sector coping with managed care and rising health care costs?

Panelist(s): Aran Ron, M.D., MPH, MBA, Senior Vice President & Chief Medical Officer, Group Health Insurance, Inc. (GHI)

Assigned Readings:
INTRODUCTION TO THE U.S. HEALTH SYSTEM

Date: October 14, 2003

Time: Lecture 9:45 – 11:15 A.M.; Commentary & Panel Discussion: 11:15 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

Lecture 3: Quality and Communication Issues – Lecturer: Nancy Farrell, Chief Administrative Officer, Cornell Physician Organization

Location: Weill Auditorium (1300 York Avenue, 2nd Floor)

This lecture defines the parameters of quality of care, including how it is defined and how it is measured. Means of improving quality, such as practice guidelines, report cards, and patient satisfaction surveys are presented. Discussion also focuses on medical errors and the issues surrounding patient bill of rights.

Commentary
Moderator: Alvin I. Mushlin, M.D., Sc.M., Chairman, Department of Public Health; Chief-of-Service, New York-Weill Cornell Center of New York-Presbyterian Hospital

Topic: Quality overview and medical errors: What are providers doing to address the issue?

Panelist(s): Mary Cooper, M.D., J.D., Vice President, Clinical Practice Evaluation, New York-Presbyterian Hospital

Assigned articles:
This lecture focuses on the dynamic changes in the U.S. health care system over the past decade. Consumers and providers both experienced major changes in how health care is organized, delivered, and financed. Although the future direction of health system change is uncertain, continued change is certain as the present system for managing care and costs, especially pharmaceutical costs, is unsustainable. How are providers positioning themselves to survive the sea of changes?

Commentary
Moderator: Alvin I. Mushlin, M.D., Sc.M., Chairman, Department of Public Health; Chief-of-Service, New York-Weill Cornell Center of New York-Presbyterian Hospital

Topic: How are providers of care positioning themselves to survive (and even prosper)?

Panelist(s): Alan Gibofsky, M.D., J.D., Professor of Clinical Public Health, Weill Medical College of Cornell University; Attending Physician, Hospital for Special Surgery

Assigned articles: