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English Summary

Ilona Kovács: The Price of Health in the U. S.

This paper being motivated by the most shocking and controversial facts of U. S. health-care system gives a general and brief description of this system from a historical perspective, and strives to allow a deep insight into how controversially it really works. In the United States far more has been spent on health care than in any other nation in the world both in terms of per capita, and share in GDP. Meanwhile the United States is the only highly developed country that fails to provide health insurance for everyone – 34 million remain uninsured –, and leaves more and more families exposed to growing fear from medically induced financial disaster.

The U. S. health care system can be characterized as a patchwork system, dominated by job-linked health insurance – nearly 150 million people are insured such a way –

combined with a rising share of government-financed programs (Medicaid and Medicare) mostly the elderly and poor.

The paper focuses on the most dominant issues in health care: access to insurance, the size and scope of insured and uninsured, and who shoulders the burden of soaring costs.

The author proves with underlying cross-country data that, first, the U. S. spends as high as 25% more to health care than it would fit to its level of economic development, and second, the wealth of the nation is not reflected by the health of the nation, compared to other European highly developed countries.

The role of the contributing factors in rising costs is discussed. And also a touch of debates over how to cure the U. S. ailing health system is shown.

The author's hope is that lessons might be drawn from U. S. experiences for Hungary's health care system too, however different the two systems are.