

The Bible and Health Advocacy: *Ancient Vision, Modern Imperative*

Theological Grounding	Abundance	Community	Humanity	Stewardship
Biblical Illustration and Scriptural Grounding				
Moral Test <i>Does this policy:</i>				
Competing Societal Concept				
Health Care Issues Impacted				
How the Biblical and Theological intent is thwarted				
Symptoms <i>How to tell if we are failing the test.</i>				
How can God's intention be lived out in health care today?				

Social Principles ¶ 162.V

Right to Health Care

Health is a condition of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. John 10:10b says, “I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest.” Stewardship of health is the responsibility of each person to whom health has been entrusted. Creating the personal, environmental, and social conditions in which health can thrive is a joint responsibility—public and private. We encourage individuals to pursue a healthy lifestyle and affirm the importance of preventive health care, health education, environmental and occupational safety, good nutrition, and secure housing in achieving health. Health care is a basic human right.

Providing the care needed to maintain health, prevent disease, and restore health after injury or illness is a responsibility each person owes others and government owes to all, a responsibility government ignores at its peril. In Ezekiel 34:4a, God points out the failures of the leadership of Israel to care for the weak: “You don’t strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays, or seek out the lost.” As a result all suffer. Like police and fire protection, health care is best funded through the government’s ability to tax each person equitably and directly fund the provider entities. Countries facing a public health crisis such as HIV/AIDS must have access to generic medicines and to patented medicines. We affirm the right of men and women to have access to comprehensive reproductive health/family planning information and services that will serve as a means to prevent unplanned pregnancies, reduce abortions, and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. The right to health care includes care for persons with brain diseases, neurological conditions, or physical disabilities, who must be afforded the same access to health care as all other persons in our communities. It is unjust to construct or perpetuate barriers to physical or mental wholeness or full participation in community.

We believe it is a governmental responsibility to provide all citizens with health care.

We encourage hospitals, physicians, and medical clinics to provide access to primary health care to all people regardless of their health-care coverage or ability to pay for treatment.

United Methodist Book of Discipline (2016)

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The Bible and Health Advocacy - an example grid

Theological Grounding	Abundance	Community	Humanity	Stewardship
Biblical Illustration and Scriptural Grounding	John 10:10 / I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.	Galatians 6:2, 5 / For all must carry their own loads...bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.	Genesis 1:27 / So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them. Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.	Psalm 95:5 / The sea belongs to God who made it and the dry land, because God formed it. Luke 12:48b From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required. Ezekiel 34:4 rulers have not healed the sick.
Moral Test <i>Does this policy:</i>	...promote God's intention of abundance for all human beings?	...promote God's intention for community?	...promote the dignity of those created in the image of God?call on our role as stewards of what God owns?
Competing Societal Concept	Contrived Scarcity	Extreme Individualism/ Attack on caring for our neighbor	'Isms' (racism, sexism, classism, ageism, etc.) Corporate Dominance	Unchecked Greed
Health Care Issues Impacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Care uneven • Escalating Costs • Health Disparities • Shortage of basic health professionals in most needed areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on individual problem or people. • Piecemeal approach to health care • Focus solely on mercy ministry approaches • Caring only for ourselves and not for the common good of all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmaceutical and Health Industries influence on public health • Placing a value on humans based on whether they are well/healthy or sick. • Disparities based on class, race, gender, age or economic status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care financing • Escalating Costs • Limited or no coverage for preventive/wellness care. • Cost control most often in the hands of health industry. They are driver of cost.
How the Biblical and Theological intent is thwarted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care made into a commodity to be bought and sold; • Unwillingness to make access available to all • Price does not reflect the cost (i.e. drug prices, other medical needs) • Salary rewards not commensurate with most needed medical professions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Responsibility called a "beast" that must be starved • The notion that everyone can take care of themselves ('pick yourself up by your bootstraps') ignoring those who are marginalized in society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will driven by donors and wealth rather than human need. • Assumption that benefits will "trickle down" • Lack of authority to regulate imbalance. • Demonizing certain groups based on 'isms', or operating by & through assumptions, perceptions & prejudices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of "ownership" in a fashion that penalizes those who are unable to manage "ownership" • Opposition to a "systems" perspective on health reform which would make health care equitable, fair, less costly and more easily accessible.
Symptoms <i>How to tell if we are failing the test.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High health care costs without ensuring it is available to everyone. • People without access • Inequities/disparities • Focus on treating rather than preventing • Excess sickness & death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion of Non-Profits to For-Profits • Lack of political will • Competing priorities • Increasing pressure on poor sick to fend for themselves. • Reducing funding for Medicaid/SCHIP/Medicare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Power; • Undue deference to corporations; • Deregulation and loose oversight • High prices whenever one provider has sole control of a good or service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corruption • Decisions made from a "business model" where profit is the criterion for success and the rewards go to the "owners". • Failure of government or stakeholders to provide health care to all.
How can God's intention be lived out in health care today?	ACCESSIBLE All persons should have access to health services that provide necessary care and contribute to wellness.	INCLUSIVE Health care is a right and a shared responsibility that is grounded in our common humanity.	AVAILABLE TO ALL Health Care must contribute to the common good by being available to all individuals, families and society.	ACCOUNTABLE Our health care system must be accountable, offering a quality, ethical, equitable and sustainable means of keeping us healthy as individuals and as a world community.