CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

CHRIST CENTERED CARE

October 2023 Newsletter

President's Column

Dear Friends in Christ,

"At the moment of organizing and administering health-care systems, it is politics and economics that have a significant impact on medical activities and more in general on respect for life."
Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers 2013

The influence of politics and economics on medical care and health care delivery in the United States today cannot be overstated. In fact, the financiers of our multitrillion-dollar health care industry - the government, the insurance industry and corporate America - influence to an ever-greater extent what care you receive, where you receive it, and from whom you receive it. Over the last 70 years we have experienced a gradual and very subtle shift in control of medical decision making away from patients and physicians to political and financial overseers. Along with this there has been an erosion in two of the most fundamental ethical principles underpinning medical practice for millennia - the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person.

These alarming developments pose an existential threat to the ministry of Catholic health care. For three decades we have been on the verge of introducing a single payer, government-controlled health care delivery system and there should be no doubt in anyone's mind, a single payer system will impose a single ethic and it will not be Catholic. It won't even be Hippocratic!

These disturbing trends have profound implications particularly regarding respect for human life. Over a decade ago in an article entitled *The Real Crisis in Health Care* I wrote this,

> "One of the keys to overcoming the principles and practices of the culture of death in medicine is to create a healthcare delivery system that upholds and nurtures the Catholic medical tradition. The Vatican *Charter for Health Care Workers*, in addition to defining the nature of medicine, emphasizes the importance of the social, political and economic dimensions of healthcare delivery and their impact on the institutional framework in which medical professionals practice. We must maintain financial and operational control of the medical institutions in which we work, or we risk losing control of the care we wish to deliver. We, and here I am referring to the Catholic laity, have the responsibility to formulate a plan for overcoming the culture of death in medicine by establishing a healthcare culture of life founded upon the long-standing moral and social teachings of the Church."

In the years since that article was published, we have failed to turn the tide against a secular, socialist ideology leading us to the brink of a government-controlled system of medical care. This has been due in large part to our failure to coordinate collaboration among those working within the various disciplines responsible for the delivery of Catholic health care. In a speech to the International Federation of Catholic Medical Professionals in 1982 Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of collaboration by stating that "individual action is not sufficient. Collective, intelligent, well planned, constant and generous work is required… to allow a better proclamation and a more effective defense of your faith… of your Christian commitment in scientific research and in your profession."

The formation of the Catholic Health Care Leadership Alliance is in part a response to these prophetic words of St. John Paul. By organizing the efforts of Catholic organizations and institutions involved in health care we are developing new initiatives to protect and advance the Church's long-standing commitment to care for the sick.

The political and economic challenges confronting us are particularly urgent. Therefore, our next major initiative will be the launch of the Institute for Public Policy and Advocacy on November 8 in Washington, D.C. Following this, on November 9, we will host a symposium at the Catholic University of America titled "Health Care Policy through the Lens of Catholic Teaching." Experts in medicine, law, policy and politics will explore the application of the principles of Catholic social teaching to health care delivery emphasizing

the dignity of the human person, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good. An approach to health care reform with the goal of ensuring ethical, affordable, quality medical care is accessible to all those in need will be discussed.

I hope you will join us and share this information for the livestreamed launch of the Public Policy Institute and the Symposium which will be presented in person and via livestream.

With your prayers and continued support, together we can restore a culture of life in health care bringing the healing mercy of Christ to all those we are called to serve.

God bless,
Steven White, M.D.
President, CHCLA