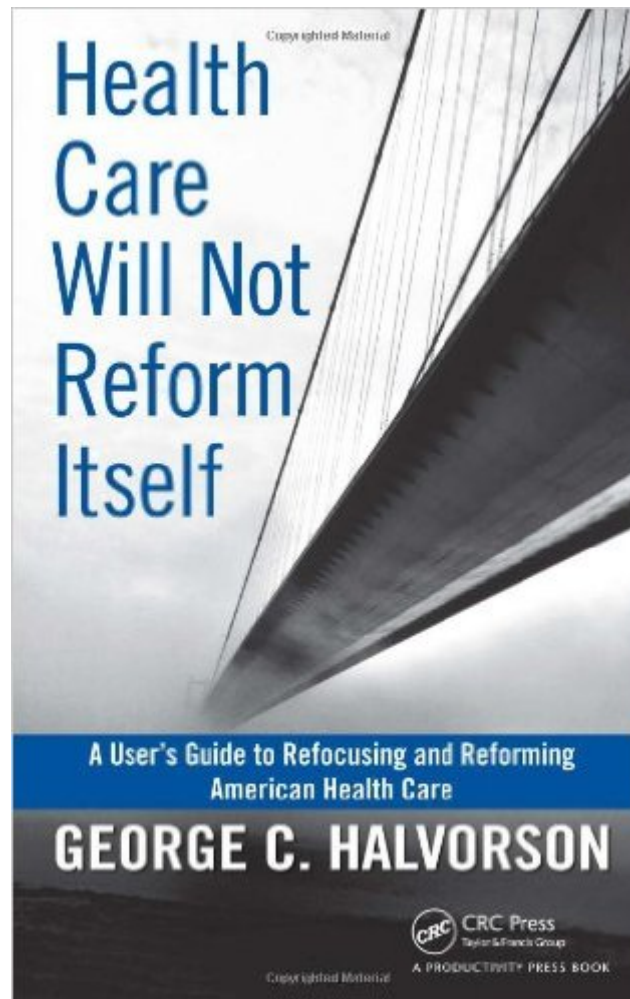


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Health Care Will Not Reform Itself: A User's Guide To Refocusing And Reforming American Health Care



Synopsis

Health care reform is within our reach. According to George Halvorson, CEO of the nation's largest private health care plan, "only by improving the intent, quality, and reach of services will we achieve a health system that is economically feasible into the future." This year, Americans will spend 2.5 trillion for health services that are poorly coordinated, inconsistent, and most typically focused on the belated care of chronic conditions. What we have to show for that expenditure is a nation that continues to become more obese, less healthy, and more depressed. In *Health Care Will Not Reform Itself*, Kaiser Permanente CEO George Halvorson proves beyond a doubt that the tragically inconsistent care that currently defines the state of U.S. health services is irresponsible, irrational, but more importantly, fixable. With detail that might shock you, he shows why the nonsystem we now use is failing. Then, applying the same sensible leadership that makes Kaiser the most progressive health care organization in the world, he answers President Obama's mandate for reform with a profound incentive-based, system-supported, goal-focused, care-improvement plan. Halvorson draws from respected studies, including his own, and the examples of successful systems across the world to show that while good health care is expensive, it is nowhere near as costly as bad health care. To immediately curb care costs and bring us in line with President Obama's projected parameters, he recommends that we:

- Take a preventive approach to the chronic conditions that account for the lion's share of medical costs
- Coordinate patient care through a full commitment to information technology
- Increase the pool of contributors by mandating universal insurance
- Rearrange priorities by making health maintenance profitable
- Convene a national committee to "figure out the right thing" and "make it easy to do"

While this book offers sage advice to policy makers, it is also written to educate the 260 million stakeholders and invite their participation in the debate that is now shaping. What makes this plan so easy to understand and so compelling is that it never strays from a profound truth: that the best health system is one that actually focuses on good health for everyone. All royalties from the sale of this book go to Oakland Community Voices: Healthcare for the Underserved

Book Information

Hardcover: 184 pages

Publisher: Productivity Press; 1 edition (May 27, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 143981614X

ISBN-13: 978-1439816141

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (23 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #897,922 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #85 in [Books > Textbooks >](#)

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Customer Reviews

With all the current interest in health care reform, I found this an excellent book to provide hope and background for those of us who favor health care reform under President Obama. Written by the current CEO of Kaiser Permanente, the book systematically provides areas where cost-savings can be achieved in an easy-to-read-and-follow format. His first and, perhaps, most important suggestion, is, to me, a blockbuster. Per Halvorson, if we get everyone in our country insured, this, by itself, should reduce the average annual cost of health care insurance to a family of four by about \$1,200. (The average cost to a family, he tells us, is now about \$12,000 per year.) This cost reduction, if it could be sold to more folks in the current health care reform debate, could, of course, be a very strong argument in favor of the "public option." But Halvorson does not really tell us exactly where this savings would come from. He infers that it would be in the insurance company premium, itself. But the book is embarrassingly short on much of any criticism of insurance companies, their CEO salaries, their profits and administrative costs, etc. It is one of the flaws of the book, for sure. Perhaps the only flaw. The strength of the book, again, is to give us hope that overall health care costs can, over time, be reduced and controlled. To get another \$1,300 annual reduction, on top of the \$1,200 above, he says "We need to reduce the costs of care by improving care."

This book is probably the best explanation I've read on why we have the health care mess that we do in the United States. We read a lot about health care in the papers and hear stories on the news but few articles get into the real reason for the problems and even fewer into what would be a really good solution. I learned far more from this book than I have from all the other sources put together. It was interesting in the way it discussed the health system in this country compared to that of some of the other countries in a manner that was easy to understand with many examples. I didn't realize

until I finished the book that George Halverson is the CEO of Kaiser Permanente, the largest not-for-profit health plan and care system in America with over eight and a half million members. My sister worked for a company that was insured by Kaiser and she was very impressed by the electronic medical record system at Kaiser. She was able to see all of her medical test results as soon as they came back from the lab just by logging onto a password protected website and was able to see comments from any doctors or specialists she had seen in the system. She was also able to make doctor's appointments online and email her doctors. They in turn could see any medications prescribed by any of the other doctors and any comments on any condition. Halverson talks about such a system for everyone in the country and mandating that everyone be insured which would help to slow down the increases in the cost of healthcare. According to Halverson, at least 50% of the visits to an emergency room for asthma attacks don't need to happen. Treatment for the condition varies so much from doctor to doctor and the outcomes can be very different.

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