

Op-Ed: Outsourced Healthcare Could Pose Relief for Uninsured Texans

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A recent Statesman article “Study: Seven working-age Texans die each day because of lack of health insurance,” AAS, 4/9/08 cited the shocking statistic that one in six working Texans die each day due to a lack of health insurance, drawing on a study “[Dying for Coverage](#)”, conducted by a nonpartisan healthcare think tank [Families USA](#). The study concluded that almost 2,700 working-age Texans die each year because they don’t have health insurance. In 2006, nearly 28 percent of the nearly 11.8 million Texans between 25 and 64 were uninsured.

The main reason for these tragic figures is the galloping costs of American healthcare and rising insurance premiums that force many employers to limit or eliminate worker coverage altogether. Insurance providers claim that higher premiums are a direct reflection of the high cost of treatment. And medical facilities cite the expense associated with rapidly advancing technology, which some experts estimate may account for as much as half of the increase in overall health care spending.

The end result is that tens of millions of Americans are struggling to pay for healthcare, while millions more simply go without it. Nearly half of all bankruptcies in the U.S. are caused by illness and the healthcare costs that Americans can’t afford to pay.

It is little wonder, then, that the advent of outsourced healthcare – or “medical tourism” as it is sometimes known – is emerging as a viable alternative for uninsured and underinsured Americans. The [American Medical Association](#) estimates that some 500,000 journeyed abroad for treatment in 2005, while a [Deloitte 2008 Survey of Healthcare Consumers](#) discovered that 27 percent of Americans would be willing to do the same. The prospect of on-demand healthcare, offered by highly skilled, U.S. trained physicians at internationally accredited healthcare facilities in countries such as India is an increasingly attractive option for Americans. With cost savings of 50 to 80 percent over similar procedures offered in the U.S., it’s also causing the insurance and medical industries to take a close look at international healthcare resources as a way to contain healthcare costs for both individuals and corporations.

The globalization of healthcare makes sense – not only for individuals and employers needing to cut costs – but for the millions of uninsured Texans for whom the lack of insurance is a choice between life and death.

Poonam Dhawan is Founder and CEO of the Austin-based MedTrava Group, which has offices in Hawaii and India. The MedTrava Group provides turnkey medical tourism services for low-cost, top-quality healthcare in India to American individuals and corporations burdened by burgeoning healthcare costs and restrictive healthcare plans.

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