

## America's Health, Innovation, Technology and the United States Presidential Election

**Eliot Sorel**

Addressing America's health and healthcare is one of the challenges for the next president of the United States, since the U.S. healthcare system represents now nearly 20% of America's GDP.

The United States takes great pride in its extraordinary health research and discoveries; excellent academic medical centers; dynamic, innovative information and communication technology sector; and, the surge in technology applications across the healthcare system. Although the Affordable Care Act has increased Americans' access to care and the aggregate US healthcare budget is now approaching \$3 trillion, millions of Americans still do not have access to care.

The United States, the richest country in the world, is the only developed economy where not all of its citizens have access to care. That high (and rising) cost of US healthcare is likely unsustainable, given its current trajectory.

Despite substantial expenditures, the American healthcare system does not rank in the top ten in the world. For those who do receive healthcare, the quality of that care is highly variable.

In the next few years, the U.S. healthcare system will be significantly tested by the following:

- aging healthcare workforce;
- retirement of a sizable segment of practicing physicians;
- on-going (and growing) shortage of nurses;
- burden of non-communicable diseases;
- re-emergence of communicable diseases;
- current minimal emphasis on health promotion and protection, as well as illness prevention;
- lack of health insurance coverage (and thus access to care of millions for Americans); and
- continued care of the uninsured through our hospitals' emergency rooms (the most expensive, fragmented, and inefficient means of care delivery).

Disruptive health and healthcare innovation, along with a judicious and smart use of technology as a tool in service to innovation, will be essential to respond to these American health systems' challenges.

Equally important is the seamless integration of attending to populations' TOTAL health, beginning with the perinatal period by providing incentives for health behavior changes (in

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both care receivers and care providers), promoting and protecting health and wellness, preventing illness, and emphasizing shared responsibility (among care receivers, providers, payers, and policymakers).

All Americans across the life cycle should enjoy access to quality health care in a sustainable system. The next American President will need to address these challenges and opportunities and create the incentives for disruptive innovation that will assure access, quality, and sustainability of health and healthcare for all Americans. Such a mission has intrinsic value and economic value added. Its accomplishment must be one of top priorities for the next US president's agenda for health reasons, economic reasons and for US security.

(The opinions expressed here are solely those of the author)