

[Login](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Archives](#) | [Photos](#) | [Store](#) | [e-Appeal](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Place Ad](#) | [Your Subscription](#) | [Subscribe Now](#)

Local News Sports Business Entertainment Lifestyle Opinion Videos Obituaries **JOBS** Cars Homes Classifieds

Editorials Analysis Letters to the Editor Polls Columnists National & World Commentary Blogs Forums

LABOR DAY SALE EXTRA 15% OFF IN-STORE! with Macy's Card or savings pass exclusions apply.

the magic of **macy's** macy.com

SHOP NOW ▶

EYE ON CITY HALL: [Make that 29 qualified candidates in special election for Memphis mayor. Get the latest at \[memphisnewsblog.com\]\(#\).](#)

Columnists

search site go Web Search powered by **YAHOO!** SEARCH

Home > Opinion > Columnists

text size: A A A

Guest Column: Socialized care -- dosed with responsibility

By Frank A. Thomas, Special to The Commercial Appeal
Sunday, August 30, 2009

Last Sunday I stood and told my congregation that some health professionals believe that up to 70 percent of all illness is related to lifestyle.

Virtually each Sunday, I suggest to them that high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc. can all be affected by our choices of diet, exercise, stress, sleep patterns and avoidance of a sedentary lifestyle.



Mark Weber/The Commercial Appeal

Rev. Frank A. Thomas: "There is not much discussion about our habits of living that increase the risk that we will incur disease."

STORY TOOLS

- [E-mail story](#)
- [Comments \(4\)](#)
- [Printer friendly](#)

MORE COLUMNISTS

- [Geoff Calkins: Sizing up the Memphis mayor hopefuls — Nutty, not so much](#)
- [Otis L. Sanford: In Memphis, on health care, Kennedy was 'at his greatest'](#)
- [Inside the Newsroom: Plans nurture habits of city success](#)


SHARE AND ENJOY [?]



I advocate that health is our personal responsibility. Each of us increases or decreases our risk for disease and illness by our lifestyle choices.

While the health care debate is raging, much of the discussion is based upon what happens after you contract illness and what kind of care one has a right to after they get sick. But I am raging for prevention.

I live by this maxim: My health is my personal responsibility and within the circumference of diet, exercise, sleep and stress reduction, I do all that I can to minimize disease and illness in my life.

 [Home](#) » [Opinion](#) » [Columnists](#)

It pains me that one of the most overlooked aspects of the present health care debate is the preventive aspects of disease and our personal responsibility to do all that we can to stave off illness.

There is not much discussion about our habits of living that increase the risk that we will incur disease. Fundamentally, as a culture, we will not challenge how we eat, what we drink, sedentary lifestyles, devastating stress and erratic sleep habits.

We have only minimally challenged the food industry, what one author called, "Big Sugar," and "Big Beverage," in much the same vein as we learned the devastating effects and denials of "Big Tobacco."

Because we will not address this corporately, then we are forced to spend trillions of dollars on health care. We are forced to fund our own societal negligence.

In essence, the health care debate amounts to how we will fund our lack of societal responsibility to set the framework where people can make more effective and healthy lifestyle choices.

Some want private industry, primarily through employer-based insurance programs, and others want governmental involvement to provide care for those who cannot afford it and keep the costs down.

As a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as a person of faith, I believe that health care is a right that is basic and fundamental to human existence as food for our stomachs, clothes for our bodies and education for our brains.

Every person has a moral right to safe, affordable, and efficient health care. There are people in our nation who die because of a lack of access to health care. From my perspective this is social sin. It is a crime before God that in the richest nation in the world people die prematurely for a lack of health care and 47 million people do not have health care.

My argument is plain and simple -- Medicare as a health option for everyone. Let me emphasize the word "option." People could choose to stay with their private or employer based health insurance.

According to my research, the government runs the Medicare program for an older, much sicker group of people and does it for about \$7,200 per person. The insurance industry provides health care for \$6,800 per person and it covers a much healthier and younger group of people.

If Medicare were allowed to cover everyone at the age of 55, it would bring the cost of coverage down because of the larger and younger pool of people that could be insured. A Congressional Budget Office study says that if young, healthier people sign up for Medicare, it would drive down costs and save a trillion dollars over 10 years.

Despite the claims that the "government cannot run anything," my informal research suggests that by and large most seniors, including my parents, are happy with Medicare. They choose their own doctor and hospital and Medicare runs smoothly and efficiently.

Unapologetically, I support "socialized" medicine. I want competition for "Big Insurance" and "Big Drug" companies. But, there are many myths and much anger in our nation now and, given our bailouts of "Big Banking," I am not sure that reason and the best plan will be adopted, if any plan will be adopted.

As a citizen of these wonderful United States, I exercise my right to free speech to support socialized medicine, even as I head to the gym to take responsibility for my health.

Frank A. Thomas is senior pastor of Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church.

[Obama Gives \\$31 Billion for Student Aid](#)
Submit Your Profile and Speak With A College Admissions Officer
www.ClassesUSA.com

[Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance](#)
Calculate Your New Mortgage Payment. See Rates- No Credit Check
[SeeRefinanceRates](#)

[Cheap Car Insurance](#)
Drivers Pay \$44/mo on Avg for Car Insurance. Are you paying too much?
Auto-Insurance

Ads by Yahoo!

Comments

There are **4 responses** to this article.

Comments are meant to offer our readers a forum for thoughtful, robust debate about local issues.

Comments are moderated, but you may find the content of the conversations offensive, objectionable or factually disputable.

Editorials

Editorial: Where were teens' parents?
Ballot clutter continues
Editorial: Pay cut strikes the right note
New court in session
Editorials: Inflexibility and the riverfront

Columnists

Geoff Calkins: Sizing up the Memphis mayor hopefuls ...
Otis L. Sanford: In Memphis, on health care, ...
Inside the Newsroom: Plans nurture habits of city ...
Guest Column: Socialized care -- dosed with responsibility
My Thoughts: Doing 'right thing' requires giving thought ...

Letters to the Editor

Fight club: The full story, please
Money's there to do the right thing
Access key to cobblestone project
Mayoral forum dashed hope
School leaders deserve autonomy

National and World Commentary

David S. Broder: Pursuing past indiscretions harmful
Marie Cocco: Cheney could rise to fight again
David Ignatius: Rolling dice to avoid 'Obama's Vietnam'
Michael Gerson: Health prescription lies in moderation
Eugene Robinson: A good idea -- that sometimes ...

Analysis

Health care bill a headache
Editorial: Prescription for healthy debate
Maxine Smith seen as honored activist