

The Christian Faith and Health Care Concerns: Medicaid Patients and Happy Harry's in Delaware

Walgreens (Happy Harry's in Delaware) announced on June 4th that it would no longer serve the poor in Delaware who can only pay for their needed medicines with Medicaid. Over 160,000 of our neighbors in need will be impacted by this decision on July 6th.

Presbyterians are encouraged to pray about this health care concern that is impacting so many in our state and everyone involved in it: Delaware's elected leaders and public health administrators, Walgreens corporate leaders and employees, health care professionals, the Church, and especially the poor individuals and families who are concerned about how they will be able to get needed medicines when the largest drug chain in Delaware will no longer serve them.

We Presbyterians believe "effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world" (*Book of Confessions*, 9.49). The following information can help in such study.

Background Reading

Bible

Jesus began his ministry proclaiming good news to the poor (Luke 4:18). He healed many who were sick (Mark 1:29-31, 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 5:25-34; 7:24-37; 9:14-29; 10:46-52). Jesus taught that all would be judged by how they cared for the least of these, specifically the poor and the sick (Matthew 25:31-46).

The PCUSA - Revised Common Lectionary's gospel lesson for June 28th is Mark 5:25-34, the story of Jesus' healing two women. Mark 5:25-34 is used for a five-session study in [Life Abundant: Values, Choices and Health Care - The Responsibility and Role of the Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) (see pp. 75-82). *Preaching the Gospel of Mark: Proclaiming the Power of God* by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm (PCUSA's Westminster/John Knox Press, 2008) has three excellent points (p. 100) on how this text relates to "Poverty and Public Health Care Crisis" and is readable online at the [Amazon web site](#).

Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

[The Book of Confessions](#): "Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world's poor is the cause of his disciples" (9:46).

"Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel" (10:9-18).

[Book of Order](#): "Compassion and Advocacy: The church is called to minister to the immediate needs and hurts of people. The church is also called to engage those structures and systems which create or foster brokenness and distortion. Christians respond to these calls through acts of advocacy and compassion, through service in common ministries of the church, and through cooperation with agencies and organizations committed to these ends." (W-7.3003)

"Doing Justice: Justice is the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves. The biblical vision of doing justice calls for

- a. dealing honestly in personal and public business,
- b. exercising power for the common good,
- c. supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied,
- d. working for fair laws and just administration of the law,
- e. welcoming the stranger in the land,
- f. seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,
- g. bearing witness against political oppression and exploitation,
- h. redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples in the church, in this nation, and in the whole world." (W-7.4002).

Presbyterian General Assemblies on Health Care and Medicaid

In 1988, the 200th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted and put forward a comprehensive statement on the role of the church in advocating for the well-being and provision of

services for all people. That document was called *Life Abundant: Values, Choices and Health Care - The Responsibility and Role of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. This document is available online at <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/life-abundant.pdf>

Selections from that document give us clear guidance in defining areas in which to work as advocates. In the words of that document, we must:

- 1) Give effective expression to the basic values of compassion, caring love, community wholeness and well-being, and justice that we hold to be fundamental.
- 2) Assure that every person has affordable, quality health services. Access should not be limited by income, ethnicity, or geography.
- 3) Acknowledge that community life requires a just order, and collective institutions of government are important to the well-being of society. Like all human creation however, institutions can act sinfully, therefore, hold government accountable for its actions and engage in the task of civil reform that promises better results.
- 4) Promote reform for the sake of justice. The church's concern for justice, broadly shared, compels us to encourage new financing and delivery systems that better meet the needs of all people.
- 5) As Presbyterian Christians, we are called to promote justice and equity, to engage in healing and to treat one another with compassion.

In 2002, the 214th General Assembly, in its *Resolution on Advocacy on Behalf of the Uninsured*, directed the Washington Office to “urge the expansion of Medicaid to insure more low-income and fixed-income persons, including the recently uninsured.” The full resolution is available online at <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/pdf/uninsured.pdf>

The 217th General Assembly (2006) approved *A Report on Economic Security for Older Adults* where it urged the “Preserv[ation of] the Medicaid program as a safety-net for those who are economically vulnerable, who require assistance to purchase long-term care, and to strongly limit the ability of states to obtain waivers that reduce the population eligible for Medicaid supported services.” The full report is available online at <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/economic-security-older-adults.pdf>

Medicaid

Medicaid is the low-income health care insurance system for poor children and their families, pregnant women, older adults, and people with disabilities, who would otherwise have no health coverage. It is a shared program, paid for in part by the federal government and in part by the states, which each administer their own state-wide programs.

Delaware's Medicaid web site: <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dss/medicaid.html>

June 4, 2009

Walgreens to Withdraw from Delaware Medicaid Program (Walgreens Press Release)

http://news.walgreens.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=5194

Walgreens Turns Its Back on Delaware's Neediest Citizens: Illinois-based company refuses to serve state's Medicaid customers (Delaware Health and Social Services Press Release)

<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/pressreleases/2009/walgreens060409.html>

June 5, 2009

Walgreen's Medicaid withdrawal a bad prescription, Delaware official says

<http://ifawebnews.com/2009/06/05/walgreens-medicaid-withdrawal-a-bad-prescription-delaware-official-says/>

June 9, 2009

State speaks out on Walgreens decision

<http://www.delawareonline.com/article/200906091458/NEWS/90609046>

House, Senate health committee leaders rebuke Walgreens for withdrawal from program

<http://www.delawareonline.com/article/200906091454/COMMUNITIES0301/90609045>

June 10, 2009

Stop using Walgreens, lawmaker urges state: Markell called on to cut ties after Medicaid refusal
<http://www.delawareonline.com/article/20090610/NEWS02/906100314/1006/NEWS>

June 13, 2009

Walgreens responds: Asking firm to lose money on Medicaid prescriptions is bad business
<http://www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2009906130318>

June 17, 2009

Walgreens is only pharmacy in state that didn't step up by Rita M. Landgraf (Cabinet Secretary for Delaware Health and Social Services)
<http://www.delawareonline.com/article/200906170345/OPINION07/906170324>

Pharmacy groups sue over Delaware Medicaid reimbursement changes

<http://ifawebnews.com/2009/06/17/pharmacy-groups-sue-over-delaware-medicaid-reimbursement-changes/>

Markell Responds to Lawsuit from Walgreens' Trade Association: Illinois-based company turned its back on Delaware's neediest population

<http://governor.delaware.gov/news/2009/06june/20090611-walgreensuit.shtml#TopOfPage>

June 19, 2009

Del. unemployment tops 8%

<http://www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200990619020>

Past News about Walgreens and Medicaid

June 5, 2008

Walgreens Settles Medicaid Fraud Allegations *U.S. News & World Report*

"Pharmacy retailer Walgreens has agreed to fork over \$35 million to settle allegations that it squeezed the government out of additional reimbursements by improperly switching the type of drugs given to Medicaid patients, the Justice Department said in a press release this week."

<http://www.usnews.com/blogs/the-collar/2008/06/05/walgreens-settles-medicaid-fraud-allegations.html>

See also http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/iln/pr/chicago/2008/pr0604_01.pdf

September 29, 2008

Walgreen settles Medicaid case for \$9.9 million *USA Today* "The U.S. Department of Justice said Monday that drugstore operator Walgreen Co. paid \$9.9 million to settle whistleblower allegations that it overcharged the Medicaid programs in Minnesota, Michigan, Florida and Massachusetts."

http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/2008-09-29-2786864803_x.htm See also

<http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2008/September/08-civ-861.html>

Presbyterian Church (USA)'s History of Advocacy for Corporate Social Responsibility

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has a long history of seeking ethical corporate practices; for the past thirty-seven years it has done this through its Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) office with achievements of influencing corporate practices affecting the poor on such issues as child labor, sweatshops, predatory lending, and environmental pollution. Church-supported boycotts have included ones for infant formula campaign with Nestle's, and the J.P. Stevens boycott to support textile workers.

We recently supported a successful boycott of Taco Bell that resulted in justice for farm workers. See <http://www.pcusa.org/mrti/investing.htm> and "The Best Kept Secret" from the Presbyterian Women's *Horizons* magazine: <http://www.pcusa.org/mrti/pdf/bestkept.pdf>

Delaware Health and Social Services' Letter to Medicaid Clients and Participating Drug Stores

Medicaid Client Notification Letter to the more than 160,000 Delawareans who participate in Delaware Medical Assistance Programs: Medicaid, Delaware Healthy Children Program (DHCP), Delaware Prescription Assistance Program (DPAP), Chronic Renal Disease Program (CRPD), and the Delaware Cancer Treatment Program (DCTP). http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dmma/files/medicaid_client_not.pdf

Drug stores in Delaware that will continue to help people who participate in Delaware Medical Assistance Programs after July 6th:

[PHARMACY LIST BY NAME](#), [PHARMACY LIST BY CITY](#), or [PHARMACY LIST BY Zipcode](#)

This background was prepared by Bruce Gillette, co-pastor of Limestone Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, DE. Another resource for additional information is Elder Don Kuesport of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Wilmington who serves on the board for the PCUSA's Mission Through Responsible Investment (see above for info on MRTI) and is their representative to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.