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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
WSJ.com

LETTERS | AUGUST 21, 2009, 4:29 P.M. ET

Panels? Almost Nobody Gets Unlimited Treatment Now

When I started reading the "The Panel" by Andrew Klavan (op-ed, Aug. 18), I wasn't sure if he was warning against government panels making life or death health decisions or insurance executives doing the same. I'd like to know what kind of insurance Mr. Klavan has that allows him free reign to make all his own health care decisions? I'd like to buy it, but I would probably be denied because I've had cancer.

If the majority of Americans think they are making their own health-care decisions they are fooling themselves. Let's face facts; almost nobody in America gets carte blanche when it comes to health care, certainly not people under 65 years old.

Shari Posey

Long Beach, Calif.

Andrew Klavan's image of "The Panel" functioning like a parole board is incorrect. Granny's doctor will inform her family, "I'm sorry, there is nothing more we can do." (Translation: Our hospital is now allowed to staff only 10 ICU beds. They are always filled with post-op and trauma patients.) No one "pulls the plug" on Granny. She never gets started on high-tech life support. The controls will be impersonal and indirect.

Jack Muellner, M.D.

Colton, Calif.

I'd like to be able to chuckle at Andrew Klavan's fanciful, if perhaps clichéd portrait of a death panel. After all, I know that the idea of such panels is nothing more than an inflammatory notion being used by propagandists to rouse opposition to health-care reform.

But then I remember the sorry truth. Death panels already exist. Every insurance company has one. And quite often their denial of coverage letters are equal to death sentences.

So here's a question: If the choice were denial of coverage based on the deliberations of a panel of experts trying to serve the general welfare of the nation (think the Supreme Court) versus the calculations of an accounting team told their bonuses rest on padding the corporate bottom line, which would you choose?

Hugh Siegel

New York

We need a reasonable and well-thought-out debate, not a piece of sensational fiction, regardless of whether it is intended to be hyperbolic or not.

Andrew J. Tomchik

Miramar, Fla.

To all the tort artists out there who back the left: Once the government takes over health care, do you really think they're going to let you sue for malpractice and get anything for your effort?

David McAuliffe

Tampa, Fla.

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