

Forum focuses on health care reform

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Professionals ranging from economists and insurance representatives met in a forum Tuesday to discuss the state of health care reform in America.

The event, held in Fukushima Auditorium in West Virginia University's Health Sciences Center, was cosponsored by WVU's Student Government Association, the WVU Young Democrats and College Republicans.

The forum was an unbiased discussion designed to help students understand the reform and its impact on them, said Erin Beck, president of WVU Young Democrats.

Six speakers presented different aspects on improving current health care.

Stephanie Frisbee, a research instructor in the Department of Community Medicine and Center for Cardiovascular and Respiratory Sciences, compared Canada's health care reform to America's in a PowerPoint presentation.

Frisbee presented different myths about health care reform including health care cost.

"(The myth) is more spending on health care improves a nation's health," Frisbee said. "In a developing country, yes, this is true. In a modern industrialized country like America, our spending has a very minimal increase on population health."

Vaccination and antibiotic improvements increase longevity, not spending, she said.

One point of Frisbee's presentation was that America's current health care system is fragmented because of disparities between the insured and uninsured.

Health care in Canada is provided through a publicly funded health care system, which is mostly free under the provisions of the Canada Health Act, according to Canada's official Web site.

In order to fix the fragmented system, it is a good idea to go back and review previous legislation rather than introducing new policy, said Christopher Plein, assistant dean of applied social sciences at WVU.

Plein told a story where President Franklin Roosevelt compared health care reform to playing football.

"Every play that I call is contingent upon the relative success or failure of the previous play," he said. "I cannot fail to account for history."

Plein suggests fixing the problems with Medicaid before passing the Bacchus Bill, recently passed by the



Terry Rose (right), director of the Fred Wright Center for Insurance and Financial Services, speaks about pre-existing conditions to the audience as well as a panel of professionals during a health care forum in the Fukushima Auditorium at the Health Sciences Center Tuesday night.

US Senate Finance Committee and lays out the framework for public option health care.

Fixing underwriting insurance is important to health care reform because oftentimes insurance companies will deny coverage based on the application process, said Terry Rose, director of the Fred Wright Center for Insurance and Financial Services.

"Health problems are like DUIs on your drivers licence. (Insurance companies) want to know about it," he said.

"If you had something before you sign up with a health plan and get something else during it, companies can look back at application and deny you coverage."


Fixing medicare and taking care of the elderly was another point of reform discussed during the meeting.

Beth Baldwin, president of the West Virginia Nurses Association, told personal stories of elderly patients who asked their doctors which medications weren't needed because they could not afford their prescriptions.

WVU students should be concerned with the debate because it is an exciting time in America, Plein said.

"Health care reform is crucial as students because you should be interested in this not only for substance, but for the process of politics," he said.

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