

## **The Top-10 Most Shocking Facts About America's Failed Healthcare System**

**10)** Medical bills are the leading cause of bankruptcy in the U.S., even though more than 75% of those declaring bankruptcy had health insurance at the start of their illness.<sup>1</sup> Currently, 16¢ out of every dollar is spent on healthcare.<sup>2</sup> Even though healthcare spending in the U.S. is 350% higher than America's 2009 Department of Defense budget,<sup>3</sup> at least 44,000 adults die each year due to lack of health insurance.<sup>4</sup> The uninsured have a 40% higher risk of death than those with private insurance.<sup>5</sup>

**9)** The number of unnecessary medical and surgical procedures performed annually in the U.S. is 7.5 million.<sup>6</sup> The number of people exposed to unnecessary hospitalization annually is 8.9 million.<sup>7</sup> These two figures combined indicate that every day 45,000 Americans are being unnecessarily hospitalized or subjected to unnecessary surgery.

**8)** In 2008, U.S. physicians wrote 3.84 billion prescriptions for pharmaceutical drugs.<sup>8</sup> This is prescription writing at the rate of one each month for every person living in the U.S.—to the tune of over \$290 billion.<sup>9</sup> For these drugs of questionable effectiveness, each year Americans spend over \$30 billion on cholesterol and blood sugar drugs,<sup>10</sup> \$24 billion on antidepressants and anti-psychotic drugs,<sup>11</sup> \$20 billion on cancer drugs,<sup>12</sup> and \$15 billion on pain and sleep drugs.<sup>13</sup> These are just some of the outpatient costs.

**7)** In 2003, a top executive of the pharmaceutical giant Glaxo-SmithKline—Dr. Alan Roses, world-wide vice president of genetics—admitted that more than 90% of prescription drugs are effective for only 30-50% of those who take them.<sup>14</sup> Some industry analysts said Dr. Roses' comments were reminiscent of the 1991 gaffe by Gerald Ratner, a British jewelry store magnate who famously said that his high street shops are successful because they sell "total crap."<sup>15</sup>

**6)** Over 100,000 hospital deaths occur every year in the U.S. as the result of correctly-prescribed prescription drugs, and another 125,000 die due to incorrectly-prescribed drugs.<sup>16</sup> These unnecessary deaths are equivalent to a World Trade Center disaster every week for a year-and-a-half.

**5)** The total number of U.S. deaths caused by medical errors of all types ranges from 800,000 to one million every year.<sup>17</sup> This figure represents at least six jumbo-jet crashes every day for a year.

**4)** The cumulative 10 year estimate of deaths from all types of medical errors is more than eight million Americans, which is almost three times more human lives than all the deaths from all the wars that America has fought in its entire history.<sup>18</sup>

**3)** In 1972, a two-month work stoppage by doctors in Bogotá, Columbia led to a 35% decline in deaths. In 1976 during a work slowdown by doctors in Los Angeles protesting against the sharp increase in premiums for liability insurance, the strike was responsible for more deaths prevented than lives lost. In 1983, during a four-and-a-half month health care interruption by the Israeli Medical Association, mortality fell sharply. A similar event occurred in Israel in 2000. In all of these instances, once doctors were back at work full time, mortality returned to the previous levels.<sup>19</sup>

**2)** Of the roughly 200 countries assessed, the U.S. ranks #1 in healthcare spending,<sup>20</sup> #50 in life expectancy,<sup>21</sup> and #37 in the overall healthcare system performance.<sup>22</sup>

**1)** In the United States, the odds of being killed by conventional medicine are almost 20 times (2,000%) greater than being killed in an automobile accident<sup>23</sup> and almost 30 times (3,000%) greater than being killed by a gun.<sup>24</sup> The conclusion is that the American medical system is the leading cause of death and injury in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

## Notes

1. [http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/jun2009/db2009064\\_666715.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/jun2009/db2009064_666715.htm) (2009 statistic)
2. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health\\_care\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care_in_the_United_States) (2008 statistic)
3. [Healthcare spending is 16% (per Note 2) of 2008 GDP (\$14.4 trillion) = \$2.30 trillion] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health\\_care\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care_in_the_United_States) (2008 statistic). (The United States Department of Defense expenditures for fiscal year 2009 = \$651.2 billion) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Department\\_of\\_Defense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Defense) (2009 statistic)
4. Wilper, A.P., et al. "Health insurance and morality in U.S. adults." *American Journal of Public Health*, 2009. (2009 statistic)
5. Ibid.
6. "Death By Medicine," Null, G., et al. *Life Extension*, pp. 1-2, August 2006. [http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag2006/aug2006\\_report\\_death\\_01.htm](http://www.lef.org/magazine/mag2006/aug2006_report_death_01.htm) (Null cites additional specific references.)
7. Ibid.
8. <http://seekingalpha.com/article/128003-u-s-prescription-drug-sales-grow-slowly-hydrocodone-most-prescribed> (2008 statistic)
9. Ibid.
10. (Lipid regulators: \$14.5 billion; Insulin: \$5.1 billion) Ibid.; (Diabetes drugs: \$9.88 billion) <http://www.biomedicine.org/medicine-news/Spending-on-Diabetes-Drugs-Soars-in-US-21574-1/> (2005 statistic)
11. (Anti-depressants: \$9.6 billion; Anti-psychotics: \$14.6 billion) <http://seekingalpha.com/article/128003-u-s-prescription-drug-sales-grow-slowly-hydrocodone-most-prescribed> (2008 statistic)
12. <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/705689> (2008 statistic)
13. (Pain: Anti-arthritis: \$7.3 billion) [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m3374/is\\_1\\_31/ai\\_n31215642/?tag=content;col1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3374/is_1_31/ai_n31215642/?tag=content;col1) (2008 statistic); (Codine & combinations: \$4.3 billion) <http://seekingalpha.com/article/128003-u-s-prescription-drug-sales-grow-slowly-hydrocodone-most-prescribed> (2008 statistic); (Sleep: \$5 billion) <http://www.sleepweb.com/SleepingPills/PrescriptionSleepDrugs.aspx> (2009 estimate)
14. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/glaxo-chief-our-drugs-do-not-work-on-most-patients-575942.html>
15. Ibid.
16. Starfield, B. "Is U.S. health really the best in the world?" *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284:483-5, 2000; also Lararou, J., et al. "Incidence of adverse drug reactions in hospitalized patients: a meta-analysis of prospective studies." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 279(15):1200-1205, April 15, 1998.
17. Null, as in Note 6.
18. Ibid.; [http://rationalrevolution.net/articles/casualties\\_of\\_war.htm](http://rationalrevolution.net/articles/casualties_of_war.htm)
19. (Bogotá) <http://blogs.mercola.com/sites/vitalvotes/archive/2007/06/03/When-Doctors-Strike-Fewer-People-Die.aspx>; (Los Angeles) <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/reprint/69/5/437.pdf>; (Israel) Steinherz, R. "Death rates and the 1983 doctors' strike in Israel." *Lancet*, 1(8368)107, Jan 14, 1984; (Israel) Siegel-Itzkovich, J. "Doctors' strikes in Israel may be good for your health." *British Medical Journal*, 320 (7249):1561, June 10, 2000 (online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1127364/>); (All instances) Cunningham, S.A., et al. "Doctors' strikes and mortality: A review." *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 67, Issue 11, pp. 1784-1788, December 2008 (online abstract at <http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=affiche&N&cpsidt=20942270>)
20. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/2/38980580.pdf> (2007 statistic)
21. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_life\\_expectancy#List\\_by\\_the\\_CIA\\_World\\_Factbook\\_282009\\_estimates.29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_life_expectancy#List_by_the_CIA_World_Factbook_282009_estimates.29) (2009 statistic)
22. [http://www.photius.com/rankings/world\\_health\\_performance\\_ranks.html](http://www.photius.com/rankings/world_health_performance_ranks.html); <http://www.photius.com/rankings/healthranks.html> (2000 statistic; latest available from WHO and still the primary reference)
23. (Deaths caused by conventional medicine annually in U.S. = 800,000) Null, as in Note 6; (Deaths caused by automobiles annually in U.S.: ~40,000) <http://www.edgarsnyder.com/car-accident/resources/statistics.html> (2008 statistic)
24. (Deaths caused by conventional medicine annually in U.S.: 800,000) Null, as in Note 6; (Deaths caused by firearms annually in U.S., including both homicides and suicides: ~27,000 ) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun\\_violence\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun_violence_in_the_United_States) (2005 statistic)
25. (Deaths caused by conventional medicine annually in U.S.: 800,000) Null, as in Note 6; (Deaths caused by heart disease and cancer annually in U.S.: 631,636 and 559,888, respectively) <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/FASTATS/deaths.htm> (2006 statistic)