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I am an orthopedic surgeon. I have practiced in Europe (8 years) and in the US (18) years). I dare to say that I know the European and US healthcare system well. Both systems are very different and most people comparing them don't know what they are talking about.

It is my opinion that the US has the best healthcare there is. Let me elaborate.

1. In the US - doctors have the best access to technology and the majority of people can get the best treatment available to human beings. However, it costs money. Most American are clueless about how good they have it. Most of those who complain about the system and cost believe that other systems offer the same healthcare as they have at home, but it is for free. It is an illusion. If one reads reports about bad US system it is always the same story. I was or am sick and can't pay and I want somebody else to pay etc Healthcare or society does not care about me etc. If they think that socialized healthcare systems care about sick more they are dreaming.
2. Healthcare Coverage - There is NO free healthcare system in the world. Even in countries with the so-called free healthcare system, the government takes a portion of your salary to cover for those services as taxes. Each citizen pre-pays their health care. No free lunch. For example Germany, each working person pays 7.5% of their monthly paycheck towards healthcare. The employer has to pay another 7.5%. It may be almost \$800 towards healthcare between worker and employer each month. The similar pre-paid health system is in many European countries. I have visited Slovakia recently, free healthcare, but if you want to see a doctor at a certain time (appointment) you have to pay extras money. Otherwise, you may need to come several times and perhaps you will be lucky and get to see a doctor. The great feature of this system is the same (average) care for everybody. This brings me to another facet of this healthcare debate. What do we mean when we refer to healthcare? What is it?
3. What we mean when we talk about healthcare - Average European comes to the hospital, stay in the room with 2 or more other people, Hospital has 1 or 2 showers and restrooms per few dozens of rooms. Most Europeans think of this as good care as they don't want to stay in the hospital for a long time and don't demand luxury. In the US, each person demands a private room with their own bathroom and shower, TV and sofa for family members. They want to have food of their choice delivered there as they all stay with their family member. If the parking lot is too far they complain. In Europe, if you need surgery you come to hospital you will learn the name of the surgeon day of your surgery or after the fact. The entire system is very hierarchical. Chairman of Dept decides everything who operates who will assist who etc. The system has many advantages and many cons too. The patient is moved as a product and everybody get standard ( average care). Americans demand more from their physician. The pressures are very different. For example in many free systems patient can't sue physician if things do not turn as they expected. In the US, patients don't hesitate to sue their doctor if they are not happy with the result. They absolutely demand that their surgeon or doctor will come to see them personally every day and they will only discuss issues with him or her. They will call their doctor

anytime they feel they need him 24/7. In Europe you have your PCP you go to. Other than that you don't know who will take care of you if you go to the hospital. You just need to come to the hospital and somebody will take care of you.

4. In summary, we can't compare the US and any other system. Both systems are expensive. So-called free system limits access and ration certain care (i.e. 75 yo person will not get the latest knee prosthesis to because he or she wants to still play tennis 3–4 times a week. In the US it is your choice, but you will have to pay for it.

I will conclude that the US has excellent if not the best health care in the world. Most civilized countries have excellent doctors with great training and knowledge, but it is not very helpful if you lack resources. The major difference between healthcare systems is in access to technology and that is best in the US.

The discussion about healthcare in the US nowadays is not about healthcare at all. It is about capitalism or socialism. In the past Americans decided that they will be better off if they will handle their affairs without the government interfering in their affairs. Healthcare was handled the same way as the sale of any other goods and services. However, these days almost half of Americans do not believe in the free market. I often hear that they will support it only if it is regulated - not free. Many believe that we can have a top healthcare system, accessible to everybody and now, and for free. It is a utopia perpetuated by the myth that there is a free healthcare system in Canada, UK, Germany, Sweden or somewhere else. It is not.

This does not mean that we should not try to improve access to care. I believe that here in the US we should change the system to 2 part plans . 1. Life long healthcare plan covering catastrophic problems. i.e Heart attacks, trauma, oncology - similar as we have catastrophic insurance for homes but this insurance does not cover broken fridge. 2. The second part would be the health maintenance plan that one can pre-pay or decide to pay out of pocket for the elective problem. We need to bring the patient into the equation. It is not good that one person consumes health services while some other party pays for it. This creates abnormally inflated prices lack of transparency and other issues.

However, first, we will need to decide fundamental issue do we want the government to micromanage healthcare or do we trust the system in which the greed-driven doctors, clinics, and hospital competing for our money will better serve us than the government.