

CRITICAL CONDITION

CRITICAL CONDITION paints a disturbing and gripping portrait of what happens when you're sick and uninsured in America. The unforgettable subjects of this new documentary by Roger Weisberg discover that being uncovered can cost them their jobs, health, homes, savings, and even their lives. Unlike Michael Moore's *SICKO*, which illustrated the problems of people with private insurance, *CRITICAL CONDITION* looks at the harrowing struggles of people that must battle life-threatening illnesses with no insurance whatsoever.

As soaring medical costs put health insurance out of reach for increasing numbers of Americans, this crisis will undoubtedly become one of the most hotly debated issues in the 2008 presidential election, and that's precisely when *CRITICAL CONDITION* will be released. By putting a human face on this complex problem, *CRITICAL CONDITION* will make viewers feel both outraged and motivated to address this national disgrace at the precise moment when proposals for universal health insurance will get the national attention they sorely deserve.

By interweaving the stories of four families, *CRITICAL CONDITION* allows viewers to vicariously experience the medical, emotional, and financial impact of battling illness without insurance. The film's subjects include:

Joe Stornaiuolo, a doorman for 15 years, loses his finger, then his job, and ultimately his health insurance. Unable to afford the medication or doctor visits he needs to manage his chronic liver disease, Joe has to be hospitalized four times in one year and dies just before the Christmas holiday he was planning to spend with his family. His wife attributes his death to their lack of medical coverage.

Karen Dove loses her insurance because her deteriorating health forces her to quit her job as an apartment manager. When Karen begins experiencing severe recurrent abdominal pains, the doctors she contacts refuse to treat uninsured patients. A year later, after she finally finds a gynecologic oncologist willing to treat her, she is diagnosed with Stage 3 Ovarian Cancer, which is almost always fatal.

Carlos Benitez, an uninsured chef at a French restaurant, has a severe back deformity that has caused him 15 years of chronic pain and taken seven inches off his height. After learning that the County Hospital will not perform surgery to alleviate his pain, Carlos becomes convinced that the only way to find a cure without insurance is to travel to Mexico, where the orthopedic specialists recommend he undergo surgery as soon as possible.

Hector Cardenas takes a medical leave from his job as a warehouse supervisor when his diabetes necessitates the amputation of his gangrenous foot. The loss of his job and insurance force Hector to struggle to repair his broken temporary prosthesis on his own. He feels trapped, as he cannot walk properly or earn money without a permanent prosthesis, and he cannot afford the prosthesis without a job that offers basic medical benefits.

CRITICAL CONDITION is produced and directed by Roger Weisberg, whose previous 25 documentaries have won over one hundred awards, including Emmy, DuPont-Columbia, and Peabody awards as well as two recent Academy Award nominations. Many of Weisberg's previous documentaries have taken viewers inside the health care system, including *SOUND AND FURY*, *WHAT'S AILING MEDICINE*, *OUR CHILDREN AT RISK*, *BORDERLINE MEDICINE*, *WHO LIVES - WHO DIES*, and *CAN'T AFFORD TO GROW OLD*. *CRITICAL CONDITION* builds on this two-decade body of work in order to engage viewers in the national debate over how to extend health insurance coverage to all Americans.

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