

## MONEY AND MEDICINE

Although the landmark health care bill that President Obama signed into law in 2010 extends medical coverage to over thirty million Americans, the promise of providing quality health care to all Americans cannot be fulfilled until the country confronts the equally important challenge of controlling medical spending. Unless something is done to “bend the cost curve,” rampant cost increases could easily eviscerate the substantial gains made with this historic legislation. *MONEY AND MEDICINE*, a new PBS documentary, will address the challenge of containing health care costs without compromising the quality of medical care.

*MONEY AND MEDICINE* will be divided into three sections: diagnostic testing, acute care, and end-of-life treatment. In the first section, we hope to concentrate on several areas of medical testing - breast cancer screening, prostate cancer screening, MRI testing for acute lower back pain, and CT scanning for head injuries. Obviously, there is a healthy debate surrounding whom to test, how frequently to test, and what treatment is appropriate based on the results of the test. By capturing the decisions that are made between a doctor and patient, we hope to illustrate the human dimensions of the debates that are often waged among policy makers, health economists, and epidemiologists.

In the second section where we will focus on acute care, we will concentrate on the nation's two biggest killers - heart disease and cancer. The film will document the treatment of patients undergoing angiograms and follow them through their treatment, whether they undergo angioplasty (with or without stents), CABG surgery, or medical therapy. With cancer patients, *MONEY AND MEDICINE* will follow women with breast cancer and men with prostate cancer, since we have already committed ourselves to exploring the difficult decisions surrounding diagnostic testing for these cancers.

Lastly, *MONEY AND MEDICINE* will illustrate the complex medical decisions surrounding end-of-life care for patients with cancer or congestive heart failure. We hope to better understand when doctors, their patients, and loved ones decide it's appropriate to use every means possible to extend life, when they decide it's appropriate to withdraw invasive medical care, and when they decide it's appropriate to opt for palliative care.

Throughout each section, we will examine the various forces that drive health care costs - technology and innovation, patient demands and expectations, an aging population, the threat of medical malpractice suits, and an insurance system that largely insulates patients from the costs of their medical decisions. We also hope our patient stories offer opportunities to shed light on emerging cost containment strategies like improving the coordination of patient care, facilitating informed patient decision making, and practicing "evidence-based medicine." While we recognize that eliminating wasteful medical spending without compromising the quality of care is much more easily said than done, we hope that *MONEY AND MEDICINE* can put a human face on this enormously difficult medical, ethical, economic, and political challenge.

Our most recent documentary on the struggles of the uninsured, *CRITICAL CONDITION*, first aired on PBS at the height of the 2008 presidential election debate over health care reform. *MONEY AND MEDICINE* will be broadcast during the run-up to the 2012 election when health care cost containment will surely be a hotly debated issue. Our previous national public television documentaries have won over a hundred top honors including Emmy, Peabody, and duPont awards, as well as two recent Academy Award nominations. Many of these productions have taken viewers inside the nation's health care system, including *CRITICAL CONDITION*, *SOUND AND FURY*, *WHAT'S AILING MEDICINE*, *OUR CHILDREN AT RISK*, *BORDERLINE MEDICINE*, *WHO LIVES - WHO DIES*, *CAN'T AFFORD TO GROW OLD*, and *HEALTH CARE ON THE CRITICAL LIST*. *MONEY AND MEDICINE* has the potential to build on our three-decade body of work and become one of the most powerful and timely documentaries we've ever produced.