

Unfinished book: U.S. collapsing healthcare

By: Arnaldo Musa
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When Joe Biden became president of the United States, one of his promises was to make amends for everything wrong that Donald Trump had done in the area of health. But so far, the result is still as dire as before, perhaps worse, with battered and full-of-flaws programs due to the squandering of the resources of the richest nation in the world, whose governance gives arms race top priority, which aggravates the threat of a nuclear catastrophe.

Not one, but several news articles would be necessary to explain the drama that the North American people in general are experiencing, not only the poor people, in this area so essential to human life, when many things could be done both in primary health care and in research on

diseases that are considered deadly.

Thus, state and local public health departments across the country have endured not only public fury, but also widespread staff defections, burnout, layoffs, unpredictable funding, and a significant erosion in their authority to enforce health orders that were critical to the early response of the United States to the COVID-19 pandemic, not to mention truly inhuman personal stances that did and continue to do so much damage.

While coronavirus has killed nearly a million people in the United States in less than three years, a more invisible victim has been the nation's public health system.

Public health, already underfunded and neglected even before the pandemic, has more recently been undermined in ways that would take decades to recover. A New York Times review of hundreds of health departments in all 50 states indicates that local public health across the country is less equipped to deal with a pandemic now than it was in early 2020.

"We have learned all the wrong lessons from the pandemic," said Adriane Casalotti, head of public and government affairs for the National Association of County and City Health Officials, an organization that represents the nearly 3,000 local health departments in the whole country. *"We are attacking and taking authority away from people who are trying to protect us,"* she confessed to **BBC News, Mundo**.

MEDICAID AS WELL

In turn, Microsoft News and Cable News Network coincided in warning that millions of Americans are at risk of losing their Medicaid coverage in the coming months, and that residents of Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, New Hampshire and South Dakota will be the first to suffer the terminations.

Congress has prohibited states from processing Medicaid eligibility assessments since the COVID-19 pandemic began. That ban ended on Saturday, April 1, with some states moving much faster than others to dismiss those deemed ineligible from the public health insurance program for low-income Americans.

That worries advocates, who say the speed will result in eligible residents being wrongfully discharged.

“This is the fable of the tortoise and the hare,” said Joan Alker, CEO of the Center for Children and Families at Georgetown University. *“Taking the time will definitely result in a better outcome for eligible children and families to remain covered. So speed is a big concern,”* she added.

All five states have already begun cutting coverage, followed by 14 more in May and an additional 20, plus the District of Columbia, in June, all due to complete their defaults within the next 14 months.

About 20 million people could stop receiving Medicaid, including at least 6.7 million children.

And this is just one chapter of many in the book about America's ever-declining health.

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