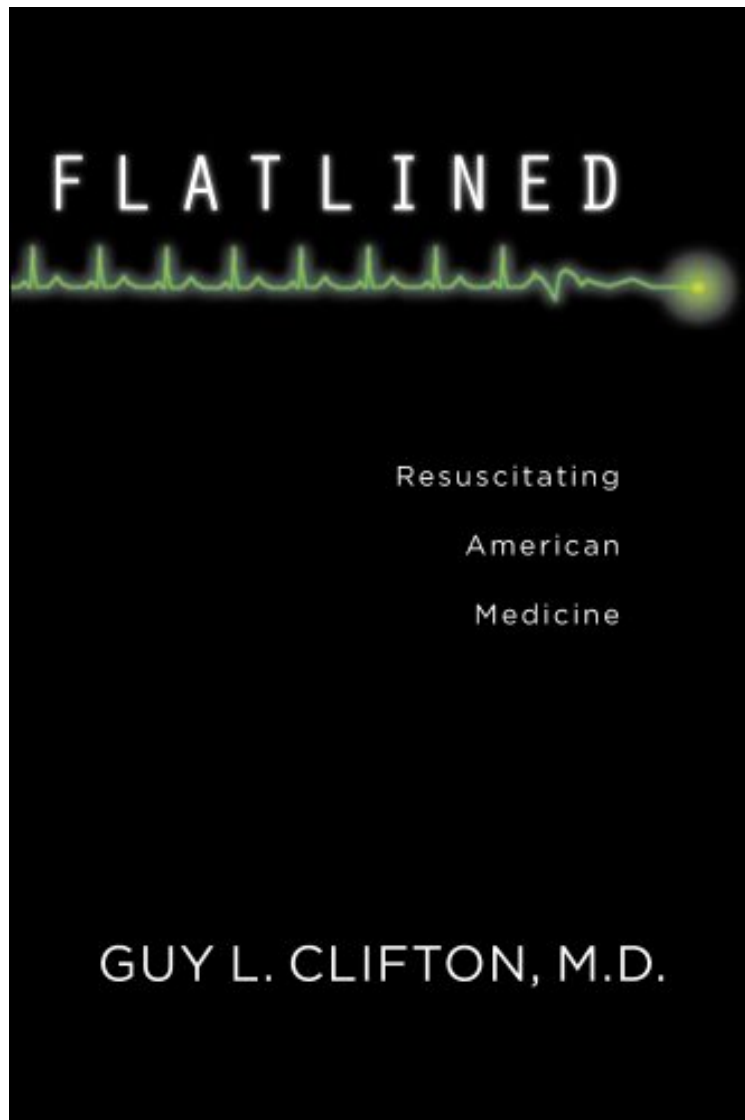


[Free pdf] Flatlined: Resuscitating American Medicine

Flatlined: Resuscitating American Medicine

Guy L. Clifton M.D.

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Guy L. Clifton M.D. : Flatlined: Resuscitating American Medicine before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Flatlined: Resuscitating American Medicine:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Problems and Better Solutions for HealthcareBy dhnSuperb, insightful book written by a practicing MD who also happens to have had Washington-level policy exposure. He addresses in sufficient detail the incentives and structural barriers which inhibit change and are responsible for "30-50%" healthcare excess costs. -- WASTE!! While top-down cost control structures are common in developed nations, the distortions/mis-allocation caused by a system similar to the top-down systems in the old Soviet Union function

little better. The author provides a thoughtful policy recommendation he feels would address these challenges. Among them, better outcome and cost information for both doctors AND patients. Insurance companies cannot be expected to manage cost and quality alone ... and they surely do not now.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Great Read on Health Care Issues By Darryl K. Williams In a fact, data, and anecdote filled book that reads like a novel, author Guy L Clifton, neurosurgeon, fully explains and diagnoses the US health care system, and, in so doing, speaks with authority and confidence based on his personal experiences and observations including time in Washington working on health care reform as a congressional staffer. He even confesses some things that might be considered ethically questionable, but assures us that he always believed he was doing the right thing at the time. I guess I liked the book so much because it diagnoses the problem and then suggests solutions based, not on ideology, but on logic and data. He explains clearly why people are dying as a result of shrinking emergency room capacity, why primary care physicians are shrinking in number, why the Medicare driven physician reimbursement system is motivating unnecessary procedures and unnecessary surgeries resulting in at least 30% of medical expense being waste, why hospitals are dangerous places to be, and why we are wasting billions on unnecessary prescription drugs. And he explains clearly why the current system is unsustainable and will have to be severely curtailed or will drive the country into bankruptcy. One disturbing revelation is that congress behaves as a board of directors for Medicare and that, "Medicare headquarters receive tens of thousands of letters a year from members of Congress who are protesting one or another payment decision. If administrators do not respond, sometimes a law is passed reversing their decision." (Page 196) That is shameful and makes it clear that senators and representatives are responsible for many of our health care system problems and that they are not helping. Clifton argues that we have to have insurance for everybody because not doing so skews the whole system as hospitals and physicians, quite reasonably, design their facilities and their practices to maximize revenue which means avoiding the uninsured, especially in emergency rooms, as much as possible and focusing on the procedures for which Medicare and private insurers will pay the most. He points out, for example, that reimbursement for a neurosurgeon on night duty in an emergency room is a small fraction of what the same person would get for an hour of scheduled surgery. Clifton references the teachings of Dr. W. Edwards Deming, Total Quality guru, who consistently promoted reduction of variability and waste. Consistent with Deming's teaching, he argues for process improvements such as getting doctors and hospitals on the same team, transparent pricing, and bundled rather than itemized pricing. One surprising recommendation is for a Federal Reserve-like independent American Medical Quality System organization which would be responsible for working with physicians and hospitals to identify and disseminate best practices and standard protocols and for liability protection for physicians who follow such practices and protocols. It seems he thinks that Medicare is far too broken and politicized to ever provide such a function and that this new non-partisan, politically independent entity will be required. Compliance would be voluntary, but health care providers will find it difficult to argue against standardization of procedures once they are shown to improve results and reduce costs. Clifton's bottom line is that there is enough waste in the system that all the uninsured can be covered without diminishing care for those already covered simply by dramatic and innovative waste reducing process improvements. If you are interested in health care issues and feel strongly that everybody should be covered by health care insurance, this is a book you should read. I downloaded it to my Kindle so I would have a searchable copy handy.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Someone who "Gets It" about Healthcare By GasBagger Dr Guy Clifton has written an incredibly incisive review of the American health care system - it's weaknesses, it's strengths and, most importantly, it's behavioral characteristics. "Flatlined" begins with composite, anecdotal stories describing the failures of our current system - not in dry language, but in personally illustrative ways that objectively describe why the various players in medicine, from doctors, to institutions, to patients, are driven to make the choices they do, and the detrimental side effects of those decisions. In the middle third of the book, Dr. Clifton explains the details of medicine's infrastructure from the viewpoint of why those details matter, and the specifics of how they lead to the poor choices in various aspects of the system which were described in the first section. At the same time, he begins to lay the groundwork for possible solutions. The third section of the book is devoted to an ambitious plan for an "American Medical Quality System", and delineates the numerous advantages such an organization could bring to health care. His proposals are not "pie in the sky" dreams, but are instead grounded in behavioral psychology, economics, and the recognition of the role that human nature and politics play when change on such a massive scale is proposed. He takes on everything from regulatory inertia to the dynamics of innovation, and does so in a logical and compelling fashion. Dr Clifton freely admits from the beginning of the book that changing our current medical "system" will be difficult. In fact, he states very bluntly that America cannot look to either physicians, government or industry as "the savior" of medicine, and proceeds to describe why each must play a role in its rebirth. He delineates the roles of special interests in all corners of medicine, from device manufacturers to insurers to pharma to government regulatory bodies, describes why physicians themselves will be opposed to his arguments, and systematically and factually lays out the very compelling reasons why these various players are both a source of our current problems as well as a means to repair the damage. Ultimately, he describes the primary reason we have reached our current juncture - the lack of proper evaluation of medical practice patterns and technology, - and describes an entity which has a realistic chance of filling that vacuum. Other than a very slight bit of statistical

"manipulation" occurring early in the book, there are no real technical flaws with either Dr Clifton's observations nor his analysis. This book demands to be read by anyone who has a serious interest in the current deterioration of American health care and possible solutions for it. His writing style is clearly humanistic, yet his mastery of the various, numerous and highly technical moving parts of the system is encyclopedic. His observations are derived from real world experience, and his conclusions demonstrate his grasp of the reality of human motivation and behavior, the politics arising from that behavior, and the end result, both current and (possibly) future, which can be achieved by taking the human factor into account.

Flatlined lifts the veil of secrecy on twenty-first century health care and delves into the realities of good people caught in a bad medical system. Dr. Guy L. Clifton, a practitioner as well as a policy advocate, reveals first-hand accounts of needless tragedy, such as the young man who died after a car wreck for lack of a bed in a qualified hospital and the surgeon who was dejected by the scarcity of resources needed to enable him to perform heart surgery on an uninsured man. Arguing that a lack of coordinated care and quality medical practice benchmarks result in high levels of redundancy and ineffectiveness, Clifton proposes that the key to reducing health care costs, improving quality, and financially protecting the uninsured, is to reduce wastefulness, and offers a solution for achieving success. Flatlined sounds the warning call: By 2018 Medicare and Medicaid will consume about one-third of the federal budget. American businesses now pay three times as much of their payroll for health care as global competitors, expected to worsen as health care grows at twice the rate of the U.S. economy. Based on his years of experience in policy and medicine, Clifton offers an attainable solution through the development of an American Medical Quality System.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . In this insider's polemic, neurosurgeon and clinical investigator Clifton warns that the U.S. health-care system is dying on the table, the victim of an insurance system using unnecessary, high-tech medical procedures and diagnostic tests to generate more fees, and a pharmaceutical industry pushing two-dollar prescription pills where a 24-cent Aleve would do. Clifton estimates that 30 percent of all delivered health care services (about \$700 billion a year) qualify as unnecessary treatment; the results are skyrocketing costs, growing ranks of the uninsured crowding the nation's emergency rooms, and an underserved, often in-the-dark patient class. On the basis of his 30-year career as a neurosurgeon and administrator, with a two-year stint in Sen. Orin Hatch's office, Clifton advocates an independent agency, financed by congress, that would work with doctors and hospital administrators to set standards for treatment and fees, aiming for no less than a "high-performance U.S. healthcare system... providing quality care at lower cost to all its citizens." An eye-opening, sausage-maker's perspective on contemporary medicine, Clifton's thorough text deserves the attention of policy makers, health professionals, and anyone regularly shuffled (or shoved) through the maze of U.S. health care. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "In this insider's polemic, neurosurgeon and clinical investigator Clifton warns that the U.S. health-care system is dying on the table. An eye-opening, sausage-maker's perspective on contemporary medicine, Clifton's thorough text deserves the attention of policy makers, health professionals, and anyone regularly shuffled (or shoved) through the maze of U.S. health care."