

WVRX – Not Waiting for “They.”

WVRX – a cooperative, high tech, grassroots effort that will assist thousands of West Virginians easily obtain chronic disease medications they would otherwise go without - is a wonderful triumph and testimony to the competency, caring and industry of the citizens of our State and its public and private leaders from many sectors. Many have written about the “program.” I want to highlight the significance of the formative “process”, as regards its tremendous potential for improving health care within our State.

The problem addressed by WVRX is nothing new; local citizens, health care practitioners, patient advocates, and others struggled with it for years. There are many similar health care system problems within our communities – many requiring far less in the way of monetary resources and contributions to fix than that addressed by WVRX. A few we address. Most we do not. Why?

This is the major theme I address in my book, *De-Spamming Health, Reforming the Health System from the Bottom Up*. I describe how most local communities lack a collective mechanism or process to address health system problems. There are many reasons but most center on a perceived impotence to change things ostensibly controlled by some real or imaginary distant and vague entity, which I coin the “amorphous they.” Thus, the answer as to how to fix nearly every observed problem is that “they” need to change something, provide something or provide more, rather than an exploration of what we may be able to do.

I am not trying to minimize the significant impact (positive and negative) centralization of health care financing and policy formation over the last 40 years has had upon local health care delivery but find this phenomenon an unconvincing reason to “drop out.” I find it a reason we need to be even more involved as local communities in changing the things we can change and joining with our sister communities to launch joint ventures and advocate for mutually beneficial policy changes at higher levels.

Some have suggested that, especially as health care has become more sophisticated, local communities lack the knowledge or competency to determine what they need and/or the caring, industry and commitment to provide it, i.e., we are too stupid, lazy and selfish. I concede we can use some technical assistance from time to time but otherwise reject these assertions. Moreover, no other entity collectively and comprehensively assesses and addresses the unique system problems within each of our communities. Why should we believe a theoretical solution reached by some distant, self-anointed “collective elite”, i.e., the “amorphous they”, will be the right package for each of our unique communities?

As worthy a goal as assuring every citizen a health insurance card may be, it is highly unlikely to fix many system problems. If such an initiative is under-funded - and fails to address certain financing, cost, ethical, organizational, and related issues - it could increase, rather than reduce, many existing system problems.

Let us heed, study, and expand the “mindset” that launched WVRX rather than wait and trust “they” to fix our local health systems.

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