

Book Review for *Fixing American Healthcare - Wonkonians, Gekkonians, and the Grand Unification Theory of Healthcare*

By Richard N. Fogoros

For Immediate Release

Richard N. Fogoros begins his improbably titled new book by setting out three tasks for himself that seem even more improbable. First, he promises, he will lay out a grand (but simple) theory that explains "everything" about the dysfunctional American healthcare system. Then, using this theory, he will show individuals how to survive their encounters with American healthcare. Finally, he will use this theory to derive a solution to our growing healthcare crisis that is fair, efficient, effective - and uniquely American.

Against all odds, Fogoros - a former professor of medicine, now a writer and a consultant - successfully accomplishes all three tasks. And he does it with a spicy mixture of witty commentary, cool analysis, and battlefield wisdom that sometimes makes *Fixing American Healthcare* read more like a novel than a book about health policy.

Fogoros' Grand Unification Theory proves to be as simple and as easy to understand as he claims, and it successfully deciphers the complexity and confusion we see in our healthcare system today. Fundamentally, he lays out the following chain of logic: 1) Healthcare rationing is an economic imperative. 2) Since we are Americans, and Americans don't ration, we are doing the required rationing covertly. 3) The entities we have deputized to do the covert rationing (the big insurers and the government) can only accomplish the task by creating a complex infrastructure where monumental opacity and inefficiency are absolutely required features, and more importantly, by systematically and purposefully destroying the doctor-patient relationship. He shows convincingly that in all its aspects, covert rationing is dangerous to individual Americans, and profoundly corrosive to American society.

After laying out the problem, Fogoros proposes a detailed solution that is radical enough to have a real chance of making a difference. Since rationing cannot be avoided, his solution attempts to place as many of the rationing decisions as possible into the hands of individual patients. And, since covert rationing is inherently destructive to our society, he insists that the remaining rationing be conducted openly. He then lays out a methodology for "American rationing" that, he claims, will render his open rationing system compatible with the fundamental American ideals.

While one may quibble with (or even rail at) the details of his solution, it is difficult to dispute Fogoros' well-argued contention that any real solution to our healthcare crisis needs to explicitly address the issue of rationing. And unlike other, more famous proposals for healthcare reform - none of which would "fix" the underlying problem even if they worked as designed - his at least gets to the heart of the matter.

Scholarly when it needs to be, amusing when it can be, and always engaging, *Fixing American Healthcare* explains the American healthcare system in a way you've never heard it explained before. It is a must read for anyone concerned about the current state of American healthcare, for any politicians who genuinely want to fix it, for any doctors who are frustrated by the state of their once proud, once ethical profession, and, especially, for any Americans who think they might someday end up as patients.