

TRANSCRIPT: Health of the Healthcare System

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This video was written and produced by the Kaiser Family Foundation, as part of its partnership with the Peterson Center on Healthcare. All charts and data referenced in the video are available on the [Peterson-Kaiser Health System Tracker](#).

We've all gotten checkups before

But what if we gave the healthcare system *itself* a check-up?

What tests would we run? What would we find out?

You might be surprised by some of the results when we test:

--How healthy we are.

--The quality of care we receive.

--How much it costs.

--And how accessible it is.

The first area to test? Health.

Overall, our population's health is getting better.

But when you compare the U.S. to other high-income countries...

We have shorter life expectancies,

Higher rates of disease burden, meaning lower quality of life,

And higher mortality rates in the leading causes of death.

Now, it's true, our health is influenced by factors other than our healthcare system.

Still, some of this death and suffering could be prevented by better healthcare.

Unfortunately, ranked with other comparable countries, the U.S. has the highest rate of deaths that are preventable by good healthcare.

We have higher rates of amputations from diabetes.

Not to mention, higher than average rates of medical, lab, and medication errors.

But health status and quality of care aren't the only measures of how well our healthcare system is performing.

Let's examine Cost.

We're spending a lot on things like heart conditions, back pain and arthritis, lung conditions, and diabetes.

In fact, for every dollar we spend in the U.S. economy, about 17 cents of that goes to health care.

That's a lot compared to other countries, which spend closer to a dime.

Oddly enough, we don't actually *receive* more health care.

The U.S. has fewer doctor visits and shorter hospital stays than average.

So, how are we spending so much?

Well, we pay higher prices for heart surgery, childbirth, MRIs, and a lot of prescription drugs.

And these high costs can lead to access problems for patients.

Every year, higher shares of household budgets go to healthcare costs.

And this is causing 1 in 10 people to delay or go without care when they need it.

And that rate is even higher for uninsured and lower income people.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that some areas are turning around.

We have lower rates of death from some cancers.

And people are more likely to survive at least 5 years after being diagnosed with those cancers.

While neither is a perfect measure, together they suggest that the US is doing a good job of treating cancer.

Meanwhile, our total nationwide spending on healthcare has slowed to record lows.

It's expected to pick up again as more people get covered and the economy improves, but it probably won't grow at double digit rates like before.

And, speaking of health insurance, fewer people are uninsured in the U.S. than ever before.

A lot of changes have just been made to our healthcare system with the Affordable Care Act, and only time will tell how it will affect things.

The diagnosis? We're getting better, but there are certainly ways to spend less and still get better quality care.

And being informed is the first step in treating what ails us.