

Beyond Obama Care

continued ▲ from front

opposition and get our message into the mainstream. First, though, we need to convince people there's a need for reform."

More than 120 people have registered for the conference, which begins at 8 a.m. and is scheduled to last much of the day. Registration is available for \$20 at singlepayeroregon.org.

Single-payer health care has been a divisive issue for social reformers, but reached a new level of debate during the first two years of President Barack Obama's administration while it worked to pass a national health care bill.

A significant part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, frequently referred to as "ObamaCare," took away the ability of insurance companies to deny coverage based on a pre-existing condition. Those involved in support of single-payer coverage see "ObamaCare" as an important steppingstone to future reform.

"The Health Care bill added a bit of kerosene to the fire," says Metz, who is an anesthesiologist, "but there's still a lot of halfway interested people who don't know what (single-payer) means."

Metz says Canada's single payer system and simple economics are two of the best resources reformers have.

The Canadian government handles payment for virtually all the cost of basic health care for all citizens. Citizens fund the system by paying higher taxes, which replace premiums paid to insurance companies. Social reformers promote the single-payer system as providing the same basic care available in the U.S., but at a reduced cost because the profit margin insurance companies need to survive are eliminated.

Canada, according to public information, spends less on health care coverage as a portion of its Gross Domestic Product than the U.S. Even spending less, the single-payer system allows for coverage of basic dental, vision, long-term, even mental health care for all citizens.

Almost 90 percent of Canadians feel their single-payer system provides quality care, according to at least one well-respected poll. A similar poll in the U.S. put citizen happiness at around 30 percent.

Many other nations, even those without single-payer systems, also spend less on health care.

"Our health-care system is No. 37 in the world in terms of quality, and we pay more than many other countries for that care," says Pat Eck, an educator who is one of the conference organizers. "So we pay more for less service. It makes you wonder why we're supporting a failed system?"

While the Obama reforms didn't include a single-payer system at the national level, it did open a path for states to create their own system.

Conyers has introduced HR 676, which would create a single-payer system, in each Congressional session starting in 2003.

"While the reform that was passed by Congress (in 2010) is the first national commitment to providing meaningful access to healthcare," Conyers wrote on his congressional web site, "I believe that a single-payer, universal healthcare system is the only way we can truly reshape our broken healthcare system."

Dr. Margaret Flowers of Physicians for a National Health Program, is another headline speaker at Saturday's conference.

While the purpose of the meeting might be viewed as promoting single-payer coverage to the public, Metz says the first goal is to pool

the experience of those who've registered and produce a strategy for fostering public debate, especially with a bill promoting single-payer care potentially headed for the Oregon Legislature.

State Rep. Michael Dembrow and Sen. Chip Shields, both residents of northeast Portland, have publicly said they will introduce such a bill that would make Oregon the first state to create its own single-payer system.

Were a single-payer plan somehow passed in Oregon, it would still need support at the federal level and then years of legal wrangling to negotiate current federal programs.

Metz says more than anything, the mission of statewide health reform is simply to get attention.

"What we're hoping for from the Oregon Legislature is that this bill gets a public hearing and we have an opportunity to talk for 10 minutes about a single-payer system," he says. "We want to present the problem, our solution and how we can get there."

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Man Killed Outside Strip Club

Two arrested after suspect vehicle stopped

A man who died from a shooting early Monday outside J D's Bar and Grill, a strip club located at 4523 N.E. 60th Ave., has been identified as Deon Moisan, 24 of northeast Portland.

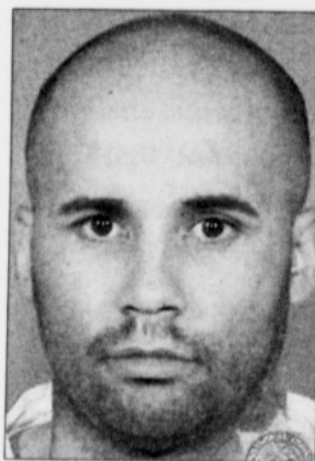
Two other shooting victims in the apparent gang-related altercation were identified as Joe Barker, 26, who was shot in the arm, and Jontae Dean, 30, who was shot in the chest, Portland police said.



Nathan Geigle

Shortly after the 1 a.m. shooting, Gresham Police officers detained two men after stopping their suspect vehicle near Northeast 181st Avenue and Halsey Street. Nathan Geigle, 37, and Micah Murphy, 27, each were booked into jail on parole violation warrants.

No charges have been filed in connection with the homicide.



Micah Murphy