

# OPINION



## Perverting Health Care into a Luxury Item

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

In these trying times of health care austerity, it reaffirms one's faith in humanity to learn that many hospitals are now going the extra mile to provide top quality care for all. That

is, for all super-rich people. These folks are so rich they can buy their way into "amenities units" built into secluded sections of many hospitals. It's not medical care that they're peddling to

an elite clientele, but the personal pampering that the superrich expect in all aspects of their lives.

"I was supposed to be in Buenos Aires last week taking tango lessons," a Wall Street executive explained matter-of-factly to a New York Times reporter. "But unfortunately, I hurt my back, so I'm here with my concierge."

A hospital with a concierge? Yes. There's one called Eleven West, an exclusive wing of New York's Mount Sinai Medical Center. "We pride ourselves on getting anything the patient wants," beamed its director of hospitality. "If they have a craving for lobster tails, and we don't have them on the menu, we'll go out and get them."

From New York to Los Angeles, hospitals that draw huge sub-



sidies from taxpayers (and often are so overcrowded that regular patients are lucky to get a gurney in the hallway) have set aside entire floors for \$2,400-a-day deluxe suites. They come

It's repugnant for the plutocratic elite to pervert health care into a luxury commodity. It splits asunder America's essential, unifying principle of the common good. To push for a national policy that treats health care as a fundamental human need — for all — contact Physicians for

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with butlers, 5-star meals, marble baths, imported bed sheets, special kitchens, and other amenities for swells who have both insurance and cash to burn.

a National Health Program at [pnhp.org](http://pnhp.org).

Jim Hightower is a radio commentator, writer, and public speaker.

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