

THE WHARTON SCHOOL
University of Pennsylvania

The Economics and Financing of Health Care Delivery
HCMG 202-401/ECON 39
Fall 2013

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Lectures: Tues. & Thurs. 10:30am-12:00pm
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 9:30-10:20am

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Description

The purpose of this course is to consider the economic facts and economic analysis of the medical care sector. In the United States this is a huge and growing industry, accounting for more than \$2 trillion in spending, or roughly 16% of GDP, and a sizeable portion of US employment and research and development.

This course deals, primarily, with research in economics on health care. We will study the production of health itself and the role of health in consumption of medical resources viewed through the lens of economics models. However, the main focus of the course will follow the main focus of health economics as a field: how medical *care* is produced and financed, in both private and public sectors. Emphasis will be on the US, with a brief treatment of health economics research in other countries and comparisons of health systems in other developed and less developed countries.

The material for the course will consist both of the description and discussion of problems in medical services financing and delivery and analysis of how medical markets work. Fundamentally we will use economics to evaluate why the health care market is different from conventional markets and what, if anything, economic analysis can tell us about these differences. This will include studying such matters as why health insurance exists, whether hospital competition leads to efficient allocation of resources and production, the role of the physician in patient choice and the role for government and market interventions in correcting potential inefficiencies.

This is an economics course. The approach taken and the literature reviewed will be primarily by and for economists. This means that charts, graphs, and algebra will be common. While these tools will be used to analyze interesting political and policy questions, you should not take this course if you already think economics is confusing, maddening, or irrelevant.

The course will also shed light on some more general questions in economics, especially in economic theory, industrial organization and public finance. Many of the important issues in general economics—decisions and markets with uncertainty, principal-agent theory, moral hazard, the behavior of non-profit firms, and the role of fringe benefits in the labor market—have concrete, real world examples in the medical care and health insurance industries. Observation of actual behavior in this industry can furnish real world tests and policy-relevant challenges for some of the more important recent developments in economic theory.

Readings

The text is Folland, Goodman, and Stano, *The Economics of Health and Health Care* (6th ed.). This is a clear, not-too-complicated exposition. The course website (on Canvas) will contain additional readings – some on health policy, and some chapters from some recent books which help to update the text. We will also read a substantial portion of David Cutler's book *Your Money or Your Life* (Oxford University Press, 2004). All readings are required, and special emphasis will be placed on the articles assigned and the Cutler book.

Notes/slides will also be posted on the Canvas page for this class, usually within a day of the class session. Non-Wharton students will need a Wharton ID to access the web page.

Wharton IDs can be obtained by going to Wharton Computer Consulting in Room F35, Jon M. Huntsman Hall, or apply online at <http://apps.wharton.upenn.edu/accounts/class/index.cfm>.

Comments and questions in class are strongly encouraged. Things that seem confusing or controversial are usually that way for many students; everyone will benefit if you ask questions. And because the class will deal with policy, there is a lot of room for honest and good spirited disagreement. No one knows the complete answer, or even the right answer, to many of these questions.

Exams

Both exams will both be essay/short answer tests. The purpose of the exams is to evaluate your understanding of the economic theory, empirical evidence and policy application of the topics covered in the course. The first exam will cover material to that point. The second exam will focus primarily on the second half of the course, but may draw on concepts from earlier lectures and readings.

Short Papers

Three short paper opportunities will be offered throughout the semester and you should complete two of them. Short papers should not exceed two pages (minimum 1.5 line spacing, font 11). Each paper will be a response to an editorial, short policy paper or letter. Each of the memos will relate to one of the primary topics covered in the course. These will be assigned after covering the topic. Specific question will be associated with each paper, but generally you should critically evaluate the topic using the tools of economics. The key to a successful short paper is to apply economics to reach a more subtle conclusion than you would otherwise and to articulate that clearly and succinctly.

Participation

I reserve the right to circulate an attendance list during some classes if numbers dwindle (yes this creates a free rider problem). Grades will take into account whether you actively participate in the course.

Grading

CLASS PARTICIPATION	10 %	Attendance and involvement
SHORT PAPERS	20 %	Two (of three) during the semester
EXAM 1	35 %	
EXAM 2	35 %	

I. Introduction**Objectives:**

- 1. Highlight the broad set of economic tools necessary to analyze health care markets.**
- 2. Argue that health care markets deserve special attention.**

8/29: Lecture 1 Course Overview

- FGS, Chapters 1; Skim Chapters 2, 3, 18 (383-391)

II. Cost, Quality and Access**Objectives:**

- 1. Review the costs and benefits of additional health care spending.**
- 2. Develop tools for analyzing the efficiency of health care spending.**

9/3: Lecture 2 Health Care Spending: Why so much? Is it too much?

- D. Cutler, Your Money or Your Life, Chapter 2: “Pricing the Priceless.”
- Cutler, D. and M. McClellan. “Is Technological Change Worth It?” *Health Affairs* Sept/Oct. 2001.

9/5: Lecture 3 The Health Production Function: What Does Medical Care Do? Is it Worth it?

- FGS, Chapters 5 and 6.
- Cutler, Your Money or Your Life, Chapters 3-5: “Pricing the Priceless.”

III. Demand: Theory Models and Empirical Results**Objectives:**

- 1. View health as a consumption and investment good.**
- 2. Analyze demand for health services as derived from demand for health.**

9/10: Lecture 4 The Demand for Health and Medical Care: Theory and Empirics

- FGS, Chapter 7

9/12: Lecture 5 The Demand for Medical Care: Effects of Price (and other factors) on Quantity

- FGS, Chapter 9

IV. Financing: Health Insurance

Objectives:

- 1. Apply critical concepts of moral hazard and selection to insurance markets.**
- 2. Understand the sources of public and private health insurance.**

9/17: Lecture 6	<p><u>Moral Hazard</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGS, Chapters 8 • M. Gladwell, “The Moral Hazard Myth.” <i>The New Yorker</i>, August 29, 2005.
9/19: Lecture 7	<p><u>Adverse Selection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGS, Chapter 10
9/24: Lecture 8	<p><u>Insurance Markets</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L. Einav and A. Finkelstein. “Selection in Insurance Markets: Theory and Empirics in Pictures” <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 25(1): 115-138.
9/26: Lecture 9	<p><u>Private Health Insurance: Employer-Sponsored Coverage</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGS, Chapter 11
10/1: Lecture 10	<p><u>Government Programs: Medicare, Medicaid</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGS, Chapter 21
10/3: Lecture 11	<p><u>The Uninsured and the Individual Market</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gruber, J. “Covering the Uninsured in the United States.” <i>Journal of Economic Literature</i>. 46(3): 571-606.
10/15: Lecture 12	<p><u>The Uninsured and the Individual Market (Cont’d)</u> <u>Managed and Consumer Directed Care, Midterm Review</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newhouse, J. “Consumer Directed Health Plans and the RAND Health Insurance Experiment” <i>Health Affairs</i> 23(6) Nov/Dec 2004, p.107-13.
10/17	EXAM 1

V. Health Care Supply

Objectives :

- 1. Analyze the incentives of health care suppliers.**
- 2. Apply this analysis to understand equilibrium in health markets.**

10/22-10/24: Lecture 13	<p><u>Non-Profit Status of Hospitals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGS, Chapter 13 <p><u>Hospital Competition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGS, Chapters 14 and 20
10/29-10/31: Lecture 14	<p><u>Pharmaceuticals and Devices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGS, Chapter 17 • Berndt, E. “Pharmaceuticals in US Healthcare: Determinants of Quantity and Price,” <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>, 16(4), Fall 2002, 45-66.

11/7-11/12: Lecture 15	<u>The Health Care Workforce</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FGS, Chapter 16 <u>Physician Agency</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FGS, Chapters 15
11/14: Lecture 16	<u>Long-Term Care</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brown and Finkelstein, “Insuring Long-Term Care in the U.S.,” <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>, 25(4): 119-142.
11/19: Lecture 17	<u>Information Disclosure</u>
11/21: Lecture 18	[Based on Student Demand]
11/26: Lecture 20	<u>Towards Health Reform: The MA Experience</u>
12/3: Lecture 21	<u>National Health Care Reform</u>
12/5:	<u>Review and Wrap-Up</u>
12/10:	EXAM 2