

Victims Of Socialism

Deadly Rationing: The gatekeeper for Great Britain's national health care system is denying cancer patients drugs that would extend their lives. Why? Because the medication is considered too expensive.

What's a life worth? Apparently not much in Great Britain. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, the government agency that decides which treatments the National Health Service will pay for, has effectively banned Lapatinib, a drug that was shown to slow the progression of breast cancer, and Sutent, which is the only medicine that can prolong the lives of some stomach cancer patients.

Banning beneficial drugs due to cost is nothing new in Britain. NICE, which has to be one of history's most ironic acronyms, forbade the use of Tarceva, a lung cancer drug proven to extend patients' lives, and Abatacept, even though it's one of the only drugs that has been shown in clinical testing to improve severe rheumatoid arthritis.

Once again, we have to ask: Do we really want to use the British system as the model for a U.S. health care regime?

Promises of an effective, cost-effective health care system operated by the federal government are cruel fabrications. The British system shows that the state makes a mess of health care. So does the Canadian plan, which is plagued with unhealthy and often deadly waiting times for treatment.

The Swedish government system is no better. It also refuses to provide some expensive medication and, inhumanely, refuses to let patients buy the drugs themselves. Why? According to a *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons* article, bureaucrats believe doing so "would set a bad precedent and lead to unequal access to medicine."

Like Canadians, Swedes are subjected to long waits. They also have denial-of-care problems that sometimes lead to death.

A reasonable person would see the record of repeated failures in government-run medicine as evidence that such a system is not sustainable. Yet every central planner thinks he or she — or his or her immediate group — is smart enough to correct the flaws of socialist programs and therefore has the moral authority to force others to participate in his experiments. It is the same thinking that will move a person to say we are the ones we've been waiting for.

Medicine needs experimentation to progress. But experiments need to stay in the laboratories, not spread to the domain of public policy. Americans are not lab rats. They deserve to be treated with dignity and not shoved aside as expendables to be sacrificed in deference to a sacred totem of the political left.