



2030 - The Future of Medicine: Avoiding a Medical Meltdown

Richard Barker

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Over the last couple of years, the credit crunch has driven a near-collapse of the world's financial systems. With the benefit of hindsight, many say this could have been predicted and avoided. Over the next 10-20 years, healthcare is headed for its own meltdown: an inability to fund the growth in demand and the appearance of costly new medical technology within the current healthcare systems framework. This 'meltdown' will not be as sudden as that in the world of finance: it will occur over the next 20 years, but the failure of the current sources of healthcare funding to meet our expectations of care quantity and quality will have consequences every bit as serious as the banking crisis. The warning signs are there, the crisis is already being predicted - but is it inevitable, or can it be avoided?

This book offers a penetrating analysis of the underlying problems, and offers some simple, but far-reaching solutions to bring supply and demand back into balance and avoid the meltdown. It is not a contribution to the current political debate but a primer for the changes to the underlying fabric of healthcare if reforms such as "Obamacare" have any chance of sustainable success.

In the course of the book, we confront many topical challenges: How can people be persuaded to manage their own health better?; Can we afford to spend more of today's money on disease prevention and detection, to save future costs?; Will 'personalised medicine' be cheaper, or more expensive?; Are healthcare IT systems a key part of the solution or doomed to be expensive white elephants?; and most importantly: What will the future of healthcare look like, for us and for our children and grandchildren?

To bring the answers to this final question alive, the book uses a fictitious family, the Carters, to illustrate the changes we will see, the dilemmas we will face and the solutions we must strive for. Interspersed between the text are the vignettes of members of the family, their diseases and treatments and how change has affected each of their lives.

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