

= Health Care (The Office) =

" Health Care " is the third episode of the first season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's third episode overall . Written by Paul Lieberstein , who also acts in the show as Toby Flenderson , and directed by Ken Whittingham , the episode first aired in the United States on April 5 , 2005 on NBC .

In this episode , Michael (Steve Carell) is tasked with choosing a new and inexpensive health care plan . He immediately hands it off to enthusiastic volunteer Dwight (Rainn Wilson) . Dwight ruthlessly cuts nearly all benefits in the new plan , angering the rest of the office staff . Meanwhile , Pam (Jenna Fischer) and Jim (John Krasinski) make up fake diseases , much to Dwight 's chagrin . In an attempt to appease them , Michael promises the entire office a surprise and then spends the rest of the day scrambling to come through with his promise . The employees wait for Michael 's surprise , which he awkwardly never delivers .

Jenna Fischer later called " Health Care " her favorite season one episode . During one particular scene , Rainn Wilson kept improvising new fake diseases . The laughter that resulted in his ad @-@ libs was not scripted , as they were in fact the cast 's genuine reaction to Wilson 's fake diseases . The episode received a 2 @. @ 9 / 7 in the Nielsen ratings among people aged 18 ? 49 garnered 5 @. @ 8 million viewers overall . In addition , the episode retained 100 % of its lead @-@ in 18 @-@ 49 audience and ranked , along with the other first @-@ season episodes of The Office , as NBC 's highest @-@ rated Tuesday night program since February 1 , 2005 . The episode received positive reviews .

= = Plot = =

Jan (Melora Hardin) tasks Michael (Steve Carell) with choosing a healthcare plan for the employees in the office , but as Michael finds it too difficult a task to accomplish , he delegates the authority to Dwight , who makes an enormous mess of it . He requires the entire office to write down their medical conditions , prompting Jim and Pam to invent diseases such as ? hot dog fingers ? and ? Count Choculitis ? out of thin air , the result being that Dwight cuts benefits , adds an enormous deductible , and inadvertently mocks accountant Kevin Malone for having anal fissures .

Meanwhile , Michael feigns a busy work day by searching for a surprise for the office workers after such a frustrating day , including an Atlantic City @-@ type getaway , a ride down a coalminer ? s elevator , and ice cream sandwiches , ultimately unable to come up with anything and further alienating everyone in the process .

= = Production = =

" Health Care " marked the first episode written by writer / actor Paul Lieberstein , who would go on to write several other episodes . It also marked the first episode directed by Ken Whittingham , who would go on to direct several other episodes .

Jenna Fischer stated that " Health Care " was her favorite episode of season one . Fischer went on to say that " We laughed a lot while making this episode . Particularly during the scene where Dwight confronts everyone in the office about who has been writing fake diseases on their health forms . Rainn Wilson kept improvising new fake diseases , and we didn 't know what he would say next . " Fischer notes that several of the scenes that involved laughing were not scripted and were in fact the casts genuine reaction to Wilson 's fake diseases . The episode was rebroadcast on March 29 , 2007 as part of an " Human resources Nightmares " marathon hosted by Paul Lieberstein . Lieberstein 's character Toby Flenderson is the Human Resources Representative for the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the Dunder Mifflin Paper Company , where The Office is set . " Health Care " was one of two first season episodes , the other being " Hot Girl " , to not contain commentary by members of the cast and crew on the season DVD .

= = Reception = =

=== Ratings ===

" Health Care " premiered on NBC on April 5 , 2005 . The episode received a 2 @. @ 9 / 7 in the Nielsen ratings among people aged 18 ? 49 , meaning that 2 @. @ 9 percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds viewed the episode and seven percent of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds watching TV viewed it . The episode garnered 5 @. @ 8 million viewers overall . The episode , airing after Scrubs , retained 100 % of its lead @- @ in 18 ? 49 audience . In addition , " Health Care , " along with the other first season episodes of The Office helped NBC score its highest @- @ rated Tuesday night slot since February 1 , 2005 .

=== Reviews ===

Critical reception to " Health Care " was largely positive . Erik Adams of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B + " , and felt that the episode helped to expand upon Dwight 's character , noting that " the pieces are falling into place " for Dwight to become the show 's breakout character . Furthermore , he applauded the fact that the episode was based on an episode of the original BBC series , but that it did not create an exact copy , but rather used the concept as a template to create something new and original .

In a review by DVD Verdict , Mike Pinsky stated that " Turning the third episode over to such a character , when Michael passes off responsibility for picking a corporate health care plan to Dwight , is meant to draw laughs out of his megalomania . But it just is not that funny . " Travis Fickett from IGN wrote positively of the episode , giving it a 7 @. @ 9 / 10 " good " rating . He noted that " there 's something Stephen King about Dwight that creates an underlying layer of menace " and that the episode is " an early incarnation of the [The Office 's] early days , its original " paradigm " ? and arguably its strongest . " IGN later placed Jim and Pam 's prank of creating fake diseases as ninth in its " Top Ten Moments from The Office " . Television Without Pity awarded the episode an A rating .