

Don't Punish Aliens With Death by Illness

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Body

To the Editor:

It is understandable that Alan C. Nelson, Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Services, should be concerned about encouraging illegal immigration (letter, Sept. 18). But his contention that giving Medicaid to those aliens would cause "a dangerous erosion of the Federal Government's ability to control illegal immigration" is difficult to understand.

If the Government knows a Medicaid patient is an illegal alien, steps can be taken to deport that individual. However, while he is in our country, we cannot as humane people allow him to die, of hunger or of illness. Even convicted murderers in our prisons are given food and medical aid.

Our immigration laws must be obeyed, but violation of them is not punishable by death from illness, especially illness that may spread to our own citizens if untreated.

People who have taken all the risks of entering this country illegally must have powerful motives to get away from their native lands. Therefore, offering them minimal care while they are here will not result in "a further attraction to immigrate or stay here illegally."

RENA G. KUNIS

Bellerose, N.Y., Sept. 18, 1986

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