In lieu of an essay or personal statement, we ask interested applicants to answer a short answer question. The Admissions Committee reviews responses for quality rather than length. However, the most effective responses typically range from 200-300 words per question. Responses that are longer or shorter are acceptable. The question is required for Pitt Honors consideration. (Max 750 words)

Current word count: 538

If I could change anything in the world, it would be to implement free universal healthcare in the United States. Everyone in America has different levels of access to healthcare based on a variety of factors, from pre-existing conditions to income levels. My proposal is to abolish privatized healthcare and repurpose existing hospitals and insurance companies into government-run hospitals and healthcare sectors.

There are a number of reasons why I believe free universal healthcare should be implemented in the United States. Chief among them is that countries with free universal healthcare, on average, have better health outcomes than their non-universal peers. Life expectancy in the US (across all states and genders) in 2019 was 78.79 years. By comparison, life expectancy in countries with free universal healthcare was higher: Japan (84.36), Denmark (81.20), Norway (82.91), Canada (82.05), and the United Kingdom (81.20). If we look at state-by-state data, the picture painted by statistics becomes starker. In Mississippi, the state with the lowest life expectancy of 74.6, nearly ten years behind that of Japan.

I saw firsthand how important affordable healthcare is when my mom dislocated her knee and needed emergency help. She was picked up by an ambulance to be taken to a hospital three miles from our house. The ambulance bill before insurance was around $2,000 ($666.67 per mile), and even with insurance coverage, my mom still owed $800 ($266.67 per mile) out of pocket. This experience led me to start thinking of how impossible it would be for some families to afford just this short ambulance ride. By comparison, an ambulance ride in Norfolk County, Canada usually results in out-of-pocket expenses of $45.

When it comes to our health, we can’t control what happens. So, we shouldn’t be worrying about how a hospital bill will affect our finances when we need medical attention. In addition, the high cost of American healthcare may cause people to not seek out medical care in the first place. As someone who wants to work in the healthcare space, I believe strongly that no one should have to forgo necessary medical treatment simply because they cannot afford it.

A possible problem with free universal healthcare is that taxes may increase. This may not be the case for everyone. According to the Committee for Responsible Federal Budget, if free universal healthcare is implemented, taxes will go up, but out-of-pocket costs and employer-paid premiums would go down. Overall, median healthcare related costs are likely to fall. Right now, America is spending 20% of the money received from federal taxes ($649 billion in 2019) on the military. If that number could be reduced by 1-2%, this would allow for a greater focus on the present wellbeing of American citizens. Another potential problem with free universal healthcare would be what would happen to private health insurance companies. A large number of healthcare insurance companies could be repurposed as government facilities dedicated to processing patient claims. In my ideal world, healthcare insurance would still exist, but as a government-funded entity.

Although my future career goals involve working as a healthcare provider or researcher, I feel very strongly about this issue and plan to advocate for universal free healthcare in any way I can.