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CANCER SURVIVOR

Doug Ulman

Doug Ulman is a three-time cancer survivor and president of the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

THE DAILY DOSE



Democrats: decision in one week

Senior aides say Democratic leaders will decide next week about the future of the health-care bill.

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A Drop in the Bucket

For health care reform to succeed, cost is critical. The initial budget numbers from the Congressional Budget Office make that clear.

Today's announcement amounts to \$80 billion over the next ten years in the form of discounts for Medicare enrollees. To put this in perspective, we will spend \$3.3 trillion from 2009-2018 on prescription medications. So this proposal addresses 2.4 percent of the total amount spent on prescription drugs. It helps reduce costs to a targeted section of the population, namely Medicare seniors who fall into the "doughnut hole" regarding payment for prescription meds.

By itself, it won't do enough to lower the cost of drugs.

However, when viewed in combination with some of the other measures already proposed in the President's budget, it's a component of a comprehensive approach to lowering costs. Specifically, the budget proposes allowing Americans to buy safe and effective drugs from other countries and bringing more generic drugs into the market.

While \$80 billion is indeed be a drop in the bucket, especially since it only applies to seniors on Medicare, we have to start somewhere. Any cost savings at this point is welcome and when viewed as part of a broader approach, it's a step in the right direction.


BY DOUG ULMAN | JUNE 23, 2009; 11:20 AM ET | CATEGORY: [HEALTH CARE REFORM](#)

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