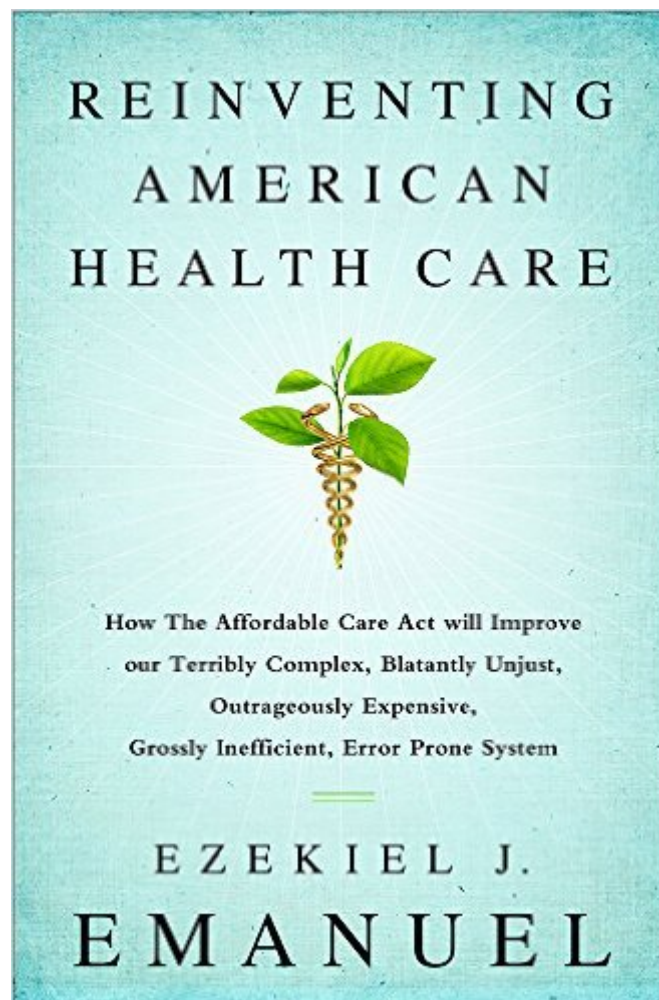


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# Reinventing American Health Care: How The Affordable Care Act Will Improve Our Terribly Complex, Blatantly Unjust, Outrageously Expensive, Grossly Inefficient, Error Prone System





## Synopsis

The definitive story of American health care today—its causes, consequences, and confusions. In March 2010, the Affordable Care Act was signed into law. It was the most extensive reform of America's health care system since at least the creation of Medicare in 1965, and maybe ever. The ACA was controversial and highly political, and the law faced legal challenges reaching all the way to the Supreme Court; it even precipitated a government shutdown. It was a signature piece of legislation for President Obama's first term, and also a ball and chain for his second. Ezekiel J. Emanuel, a professor of medical ethics and health policy at the University of Pennsylvania who also served as a special adviser to the White House on health care reform, has written a brilliant diagnostic explanation of why health care in America has become such a divisive social issue, how money and medicine have their own—quite distinct—American story, and why reform has bedeviled presidents of the left and right for more than one hundred years. Emanuel also explains exactly how the ACA reforms are reshaping the health care system now. He forecasts the future, identifying six mega trends in health that will determine the market for health care to 2020 and beyond. His predictions are bold, provocative, and uniquely well-informed. Health care—one of America's largest employment sectors, with an economy the size of the GDP of France—has never had a more comprehensive or authoritative interpreter.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ezekiel Emanuel just published an important book with a great title, "Reinventing American Health

Care: How the Affordable Care Act Will Improve Our Terribly Complex, Blatantly Unjust, Outrageously Expensive, Grossly Inefficient, Error Prone System." In it, he describes the history of health care reform in the US, gives an overview of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and speculates about future trends in American health care. The concluding chapter of Emanuel's book is entitled, "Six Megatrends in Health Care: The Long-Term Impact of the ACA." I will devote this review to discussing his six "megatrends."

Megatrend 1) The End of Insurance Companies as We Know Them Emanuel argues that health insurance companies will "shift their business to focus on offering services they have expertise in, particularly analytics, actuarial modeling, risk management, and other management services...." or "transform themselves into integrated delivery systems," or they will go out of business. This seems quite plausible. However, I think it will depend on how the ACA implementation goes over the next several years. If insurance companies raise their rates, there could be major political fallout.

Megatrend 2) VIP Care for the Chronically and Mentally Ill Emanuel argues that "tertiary prevention" for chronically ill people with diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc, and mental health care for people with depression/anxiety, will become an increasing focus of our health care system. I agree. I've taken care of many patients with chronic diseases and mental illness who cycle in and out of the hospital. The question is if our fragmented health system can provide coordinated, community-based care for these vulnerable people.

Ezekiel Emanuel has written a very interesting book about the U.S. health care system. In the introduction, he tries to make sense of how three individuals were affected by this system. He then proceeds to get into the nitty-gritty of the American health care system beginning with its roots. The book is divided into three parts. In Part I we review the history of the American health care system, in Part II we explore the efforts to reform the system, and finally, in part III, we gaze into the crystal ball of the future.

In the first part, he provides us with a brief history of healthcare in the U.S. It was interesting to learn how the employer-based system came to predominate in society. In the rest of the section we get a very detailed description of how healthcare is financed, who the providers are, how Americans get their healthcare, and interestingly, how this all works together to give us our current healthcare system. We are provided with many tables, charts, and diagrams, which provide some interesting statistics.

In part two Emanuel discusses the history of health care reform. He first covers the history of health care from Teddy Roosevelt, to Franklin Roosevelt, to Truman, to Lyndon Johnson, and on to Clinton. Truman was a strong advocate for national health care but was stopped by the first Republican controlled Congress since 1932. Johnson did manage to introduce Medicare and Medicaid laws, and most can remember what happened to Clinton's proposal. Interestingly

in 1971, there were 22 separate health insurance bills before Congress. Not one made it out of committee. We clearly see the difficult road that was followed to achieve some sort of national health care.

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