

Implementation and modification (healthcare)



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The paper "Healthcare Policy Bill and Changes to the Medicare" is a wonderful example of an assignment on health sciences and medicine. The changes to Medicare in 2003 were deemed necessary. Before the introduction of this bill, many elderly people in the United States had been facing difficulties in accessing prescription medication because of its higher costs. Hence, redesigning Medicare was essential to ensure an adequate supply of affordable prescription medication and more affordable healthcare plans to the concerned beneficiaries. In addition, it was estimated that Medicare financing would go out of control by 2026 if the Medicare expenses grew at the current rate. Hence, the proposed changes were extremely necessary to reduce the overall Medicare expenses and to improve the quality of services offered to its stakeholders. The recommended changes would significantly increase competition among healthcare providers and this situation, in turn, might provide senior citizens with better choices. According to Kemper (2004), the policy change budgeted \$400 billion and this amount was deemed adequate to offer prescription medication to nearly 40 million seniors at an affordable rate. As per the provisions of the new plan, authorities will pay 75% of the costs up to \$2,250. In total, the changes to Medicare were necessary to improve the healthcare system and its efficiency.

As Ganz (2004) points out, the main provisions of the new legislation include affordable distribution of the prescription medication to seniors, partial privatization of the healthcare, and promotion of increased competition among healthcare providers. The bill was specifically enacted to cut down the costs of prescription drugs for the elderly population in the country. The Federal Government believed that this bill would ensure the participation of

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private healthcare providers. It was also believed that increased competition among providers would help the senior population to obtain improved and cheap Medicare services.

- Although the bill is useful to reduce the costs of prescription medication, the new legislation is less likely to accomplish the desired goals. This law change promotes the privatization of Medicare. However, private players tend to take some unfair advantages of the terms of this legislation and this situation adversely affects the true objectives of this policy. In addition, this change has intensified the financial burden of the government which was already running at a deficit.

George W Bush and his Republican party played a pivotal role in setting the agenda for this Medicare policy change and Bush signed the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act for the fulfillment of an election pledge (BBC). As The BBC News reports, Bush signed the bill with great fanfare (BBC News). Republican Party believed that this legislative amendment would assist the party to gain strong public support as the bill was deemed capable of serving the interests of the US' elderly population. The bill appeared to have failed in many times since majority of the Senators, including even some Republicans, had been opposing the enforcement of the bill. However, as the Republican leadership had some special interests in this bill they influenced some of the opposing members and ensured the enforcement of the new Medicare policy.

- The legislation was controversial and it had been strongly debated for nearly six months in Congress before it was passed on 25th November 2003 and signed by the President on 8th December 2003. It is still criticized that Bush signed the bill in order to protect his personal interests and that the

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Republican leadership had engaged in some unlawful practices to get majority support in the Senate. However, supporters of this change strongly argue that this Medicare reform would make prescription drugs affordable to the country's senior population. According to George W Bush, "our nation has made a promise, a solemn promise to America's seniors." (as cited in BBC News, 2003). In contrast, Democrats claim that the unhealthy competition among private healthcare providers has left the country's elderly people at the hands of private insurers and drug companies. Some of the policymakers oppose the controversial free-market reforms of this new policy. At the same time, some Republicans are concerned about the possible financial burden that this policy may impose on the US government. Admittedly, the change would assist private insurers and drug companies although the country's seniors may get some cost benefits from this legislation. In short, the policy change may negatively impact the overall quality of Medicare.

- Evidently, the electronically stored data such as costs and access to individual patient files played an important role in the decision-making process. This type of data assists regulators to statistically analyze the financial aspects of the policy and the economic feasibility of the proposed change. It is evident that electronically stored form of data is easy to be analyzed. Also, it can be effectively employed to reach immediate conclusions.