

Proposed health care act viewed of 'highest priority'

Wilbur J. Cohen, dean of The University of Michigan School of Education, has lent strong support to the proposed Maternal and Child Health Care Act, calling it "the highest priority in health and medical care in the nation."

Moreover, the former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare said he is convinced that the program can be implemented effectively and economically, at a very small net cost to the taxpayer and to the economy in general.

The bill, H.R. 1357, would establish a program of comprehensive health care for all children up to 18 years of age and maternity benefits for all women.

"Under the proposed bill, part of the cost is levied as a percentage of payroll," Cohen told the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Whole Blue Cross-Blue Shield premiums are deducted on a flat rate basis, this legislation provides that employee contributions would vary according to salary level. The new plan is more progressive and less burdensome for the lower-paid worker."

MR. ESTIMATED the federal government's contributions of approximately \$2.2 billion toward children's medical care in fiscal year 1974 and the additional \$1.4 billion from state and local governments could be held at approximately the existing level except for price increases.

"One of the key benefits," Cohen said, "lies in the possibility of reducing poverty through an effective family planning program as part of a comprehensive maternal and child health care plan."

"About two-thirds of all the children living in poverty in the United States are in families of more than four persons," he explained. "Family planning services should be available to every person who wishes them, and reimbursement for such services should be included under the program."

COHEN EXPRESSED strong support for the inclusion of dental services for children and for reimbursement for specified drugs. But he recommended that a separate effective date be set for implementing those phases of the program.

"I favor a comprehensive national health plan covering everyone in the nation," Cohen told the committee. "However, to implement such a national undertaking all at once might well tax the managerial genius of American enterprise. Hence, I favor the maternal and child health care proposal as a constructive and cost-effective starting point."

"Recent cost increases in medical services have been lowest in the child age population," he noted, "and that age group is not likely to increase substantially in the immediate years ahead. I believe that the financing of maternal and child health care costs through a public system is likely to be more equitable than it is at present."

"The possibility of overutilization, abuse, fraud and errors is probably least among providers and patients of maternal and child care," he added.

"THERE ARE PRESENTLY about 30 million children in the age group up to six years, about 22 million aged 6 to 12, and about 25 million up to age 18. Adding the three million births per year and their three million mothers, this legislation would affect 73 million persons."

Quoting from the Congressional findings, Cohen concluded, "adequate medical care for pregnant women and children has the greatest potential for improving the health status of the general population."

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Alcohol forum prepares program

To raise the awareness of women of Michigan concerning alcohol, the Michigan Forum on Women and Alcohol is preparing a series of video tape cassettes showing women in alcoholic situations.

An announcement will be made when the tapes are ready to be shown to church groups and civic clubs around the state. One of the tapes, "Helping," concerns a woman with a drinking problem. She is encouraged by the people in her life, her best friend, her doctor, a policeman, a clergyman, even her husband to ignore the problem instead of dealing with it.

All of these people are not willing to confront her with her own potential alcoholism, but are unintentionally driving her deeper into an alcoholic state of mind.

In a tape called "Loneliness," the everyday inconveniences and distractions of a housewife are shown as possibly contributing to her potential alcoholism.

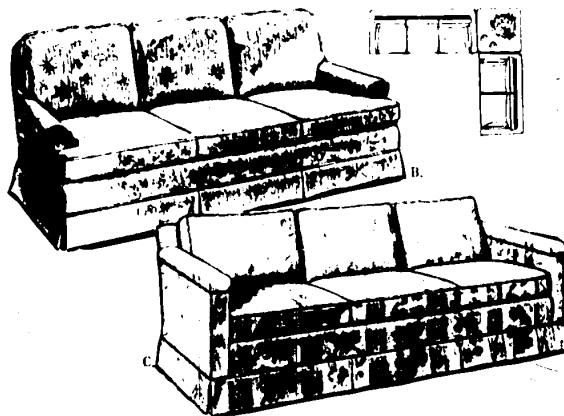
The third tape deals with the potential female alcoholic in a work situation. It highlights the trap people may fall into on the job.

The tapes are not designed to give answers, but to provoke questions from the audience. They attempt to show some of the little known aspects of alcoholism. One of these is dual addiction, which seems more prevalent in women than in men.



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