

Taxpayer-Paid Prayer?

By ACSH Staff — November 16, 2009

This piece *first appeared in the* [\[1\] New York Post](#) [\[1\]](#).

It turns out that government-run health insurance means politician-decided health *benefits*. Pro-choicers got a nasty surprise on Nov. 7 when the House voted to exclude abortion from taxpayer-subsidized ObamaCare benefits -- but the rest of us may get a fresh shock if the Senate moves to mandate coverage for Christian Science "prayer treatments."

The House bill wound up not including the provision to require insurers to consider coverage of "religious and spiritual health care" because it couldn't work out church-state issues. But Sens. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and John Kerry (D-MA) are pushing to get it into the Senate's bill and eventually into law.

So much for eliminating health-care waste.

Tax dollars shouldn't pay for unscientific treatments -- which all "alternative" medicine is, by definition. (As soon as a treatment is shown through established scientific methods to be safe and effective, it's no longer "alternative.")

In fact, promoting alternative medicine is already the law of the land, thanks to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

Created under pressure from Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), the federal unit spends \$100 million-plus a year to study nonscientific treatments.

Harkin has made it clear how he wants those "studies" to come out. At a hearing earlier this year, he said: "One of the purposes of this center was to investigate and validate alternative approaches. Quite frankly, I must say publicly that it has fallen short. I think quite frankly that in this center and in the office previously before it, most of its focus has been on disproving things rather than seeking out and approving."

That is, Harkin sees government scientists' refusal to validate alternative treatments as a failure not of the treatments but of the evaluation process. Had the tests been rigged, perhaps they'd have satisfied him.

As the Wall Street Journal noted recently, "According to NCCAM, there's little evidence to support homeopathy as an effective treatment for any specific condition. The NCCAM [further] notes that studying homeopathy is difficult because 'its key concepts are not consistent with the current understanding of science, particularly chemistry and physics.' "

In other words, scientists aren't heeding Harkin -- so far. But the history of "expert" witnesses in court cases and congressional hearings is full of credentialed scientists pushing poppycock to

serve their own pocketbooks or pet causes.

Incidentally, Harkin recently became chairman of the Senate Health Committee.

In his inaugural speech, President Obama promised to "restore science to its rightful place." If health-care reform means putting politician's preferences ahead of medical expertise, he'll have done the exact opposite.

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