

# Hita La'mon: Health Care

"Cultural and language barriers . . . have made the aged of my people reluctant to, and often fearful of, seeking badly needed medical help from "foreign" doctors. Being a native I feel that I will do a great service by becoming a doctor and helping to alleviate the health problems on my island."

-W. Chris Perez, 1972



## Traditional Views on Health Care:

- Chamorus have traditionally prioritized the health and wellbeing of every member of society. Through a system of inafa'maolek, or doing good for all, Chamorus have a strong sense of interconnectedness with each other and their environment.

•“The Chamoru people have lived in the Mariana Islands for over four thousand years. Prior to contact with Europeans, they maintained healthy diets and lifestyles and revered their healers, who were called makana and kakana. The makana and kakana were believed to possess the power of causing and curing illness by invoking the aniti (spirits of the ancestors).” -Tricia A. Lizama

- Historically, Chamorus lived very healthy lives. However, colonization has tremendously changed how Chamorus view health and how they access health care. For many on Guam today, health care has become inaccessible and expensive.

## American Health Care at a Glance:

“The United States spends a higher proportion of its resources on healthcare than other countries; at the same time, a significant portion of the population is denied services, a situation almost unheard of in other countries.”

-Mary-Jane Schneider, *Introduction to Public Health*, 2017

- The Census Bureau reports that 11.2 million Americans live in poverty due to out-of-pocket medical expenses.

- “Americans are not forgoing healthcare in order to buy new designer jeans and handbags, they are skipping pills and missing checkups so that they can put food on the table and put their children through college.” -Farzon A Nhavi, M.D.

- “Ultimately, the United States remains one of the only advanced industrialized nations without a comprehensive national health insurance system and with little prospect for one developing under President Trump or even subsequent presidents...” -*The Conversation*, May 15, 2017

## Guam Inherited the Expensive American Health Care Model:

- “The government of Guam's health insurance cost for the financial year that begins in October 2018 is projected to hit \$101 million.” -Christine Baleto, director of Guam Department of Administration

- “According to the 2013 Guam Statistical Yearbook, approximately 32,465 residents — 21 percent of Guam's population — lack health insurance. With such a large segment of the population uninsured, [Senator Dennis] Rodriguez said, Guam's medical centers suffer an outsized financial burden.” - *Pacific Daily News*, March 23, 2017

## American Territories Share Health Care Struggles:

- “Hospitals in the US territories demonstrated significantly worse performance compared with the US states on all core process measures . . . Furthermore, the higher mortality rates observed in the US territories are not the result of a few outlier institutions; virtually all of the territorial hospitals performed below the US national averages. Notably, the US territories have lower federal insurance reimbursement rates compared with all of the US states.” -Nunez-Smith, M., et. al. *Quality of Care in the US Territories*

# Universal Health Coverage

•All United Nations' Member States have agreed to try to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030, "Reaffirming the right of every human being to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health ... and the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond one's control..." -United Nations' Resolution on Global Health and Foreign Policy, 2012

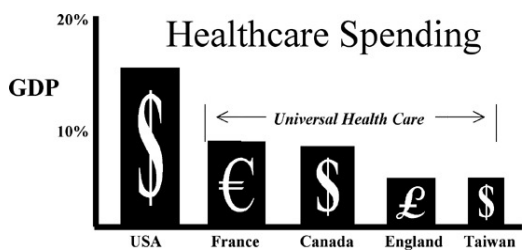
• According to the World Health Organization, "Every year 100 million people are pushed into poverty and 150 million people suffer financial catastrophe because of out-of-pocket expenditure on health services."

• "UHC means that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. It includes the full spectrum of essential, quality health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care." -World Health Organization

• As this map of countries who provide UHC reveals, "The U.S. stands almost entirely alone among developed nations that lack universal health care." -The Atlantic



## Comparative Model: Taiwan



• Taiwan adopted its government-administered National Health Insurance (NHI) system in 1995.

• "Before the introduction of the NHI, there were a range of separate insurance schemes covering around 57% of the population. These included labour insurance, governmental employee insurance, farmers' health insurance and fishermen's health insurance. However, most of the general practitioners (GPs) practiced independently, and there was a high-level of out-of-pocket payments from patients. The NHI system consolidated all these small insurance schemes into a single national insurance system. Every Taiwanese citizen has a NHI IC card (integrated circuit card, a smart card), which is used to identify the person, store a brief medical history and to bill the national insurer. The patient has to bring his NHI IC card each time he/she utilizes medical services. The hospitals will then claim the related charges from the government. The claims process for healthcare providers is very rapid, in contrast to the rather lengthy processes for payment seen in the USA and UK." -London Journal of Primary Care

• Waiting lines for visits and procedures, if any, are short, and patients have free choice of providers, as there is no gate-keeper system such as that in the UK's National Health Service or in American HMOs. A main reason for NHI's high performance is the ability of the government, as the single payer, to set and regulate fees, and impose a global budget system that caps total NHI expenditure. -Tsung-Mei Cheng, Brookings 2015

## Nihi ta Hassuyi Este (Questions to Consider)

1. What kinds of comprehensive health policies and reforms can an Independent Guåhan implement to shape a healthier community?
2. What are three ways you can personally work to improve your health and/or health care options today?

