Syllabus: How Healthy is Our Healthcare and Why Does It Cost So Much?

This discussion will consist of four 2hr sessions that will cover the following subjects:

Session 1. After an open discussion of what the participants hope to gain from this OLLI course, we will discuss the evolution of our current healthcare and health insurance system from the early 20th century to the present. This will be compared and contrasted to the types of health insurance systems in the other 23 developed countries all that provide universal healthcare to all their residents. An overview of our current healthcare marketplace will be presented as a prelude to session 2.

Session 2. We will have an in depth discussion of the current insurers i.e. Medicaid, Medicare, private health insurance, and the Patient Protection and the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare---the Good the Bad, and the Ugly) We will “follow the money” i.e. $3.6 Trillion per year that we spend on healthcare including the sources of this funding and how it is spent.

Session 3. We will focus on the incredibly high cost of our healthcare and how this impacts us. This leads us to an in depth discussion of the huge amount of waste, fraud, and abuse which includes the outrageous costs of prescription drugs, hospital care, provider fees, and other charges that often lead to personal bankruptcy from the inability to pay these bills which does no happen in any other country. Fraud is also rampant in our systems and we will see examples and discuss what can be done about it. We will see the influence of special interests as an impediment to reform.

Session 4. We will review the key points from the 3 previous sessions and discuss potential solutions including the current proposed legislative proposals to control costs and provide single payer affordable, comprehensive, universal health insurance for all -- how this would work and how it would be funded.

The goal of these sessions is to inform the participants on the facts so that each can than educate their friends and family on an issue that impacts all of us.