

Why those numbers don't make sense

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Less than 500 grams doesn't count.

Neither does two or fewer days.

Now it is always fashionable to jump and shout and gripe about ignorant politicians, but this time some of them have really earned the label. And continue to do so every day.

We've all seen them yammering on and on. Recounting, like so many trained parrots, the statistics time and again. And, since we're in the middle of this health care debate, it is happening with more frequency. We've all heard it before, several times, and it goes something like this:

"Our health care system is just awful. Why, the United States ranks 16th in the world in infant mortality. Yet we spend way, way, way more on health care than the 15 countries that rank above us. That just proves that the current system is rotten and we have to change it. The only way to fix it is to have the government run things blah, blah, blah, etc. etc. etc."

It's the old canard n say something often enough and it becomes true.

No matter how ridiculous it is.

Today, everyone knows that more babies die in the United States than practically anywhere in the world.

Except it doesn't pass the sniff test.

People come to the United States from all over the world for health care. They do that because our system is far superior to what they have at home. And we're not talking about third-world countries here. Folks from Canada come to the U.S. frequently for treatment. In fact, the Canadian government sends patients to U.S. hospital for health care. They do it because they cannot provide the care.

Including care for high-risk babies.

Now isn't that odd? All these politicians who want government health care cite statistics that show that bunches of babies die in U.S. hospitals. Yet, bureaucrats who run a government system send babies here for care.

What gives?

As is often the case, the numbers are phony.

A baby born alive in a U.S. hospital is well, a baby. Doesn't matter how long the baby lives, doesn't matter how much the baby weighs - when it's delivered, it's a baby.

That's not true in most places.

For example, in Norway any baby born that weighs less than 500 grams n about 1.1 lbs. n and dies is not counted as a baby. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Norway is the ◆leader' in infant mortality rates. You know, the number cited so often by politicians to sell their version of health care.

Perhaps even more interesting is that most countries that track such statistics, any baby that dies before it is 2 days old, does not count as a baby. In the United States of course, all live births are babies. In this country, we do not make the distinction on what it takes to qualify to be a person.

Apparently it requires the genius of a bureaucrat to manufacture another name for a deceased infant.

But one thing that can be said for the phony infant mortality rate that proponents of government health continually chant n it answers the question.

What happens when the money runs out?

That is the issue that has prompted so many Americans to raise a fuss over the past few weeks. When your 79-year-old mother is refused surgery we now understand how the government will deal with the adverse publicity.

It just didn't happen.

The same people who will provide the care will keep the records and without fail they will tell us what a wonderful job they are doing. The politicians who love government care (for others) will repeat the numbers until everyone is convinced all is well with the world.

There is one thing that could top a government takeover of medicine.

Unlike a deceased newborn, your 79-year-old mother can raise hell with politicians.

- DAN HAMMES is publisher of this newspaper.