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Joan Claybrook, President

**Statement by Sidney M. Wolfe, M.D.
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Concerning J.A.M.A. Article Published September, 14, 1994:
A Better Quality Alternative: Single Payer National Health Reform
by the Physicians for a National Health Program Working Group**

The temporary collapse of all efforts to end one of our major national disgraces--the fact that for Americans, health care is not a right--is a proper time to look at the damage which has already been done to the quality of our health care system without any legislation to blame. The forces of greed--led by the health insurance industry--are fiercely pushing and shoving each other to grab as much as they can of the trillion dollar annual pot of health care gold. En route, they have already done much to destroy the doctor-patient relationship and worsen the quality of medical care.

The ten-point list of quality principles which the Physicians for a National Health Program study group is publishing clearly shows how a single-payer plan, modeled on the Canadian system, will improve quality. This contrasts sharply with all of the other national health insurance proposals which, by virtue of strengthening the hand of the health insurance industry, will worsen quality even more than the not-so-invisible hands of the market have already done.

The list of quality-improving principles is a blueprint for a national health program which would make our country a world leader instead of a shameful laggard. The implementation of this blueprint is inconsistent with the continued existence of the health insurance industry. The sooner we realize this, the better it will be not only for the 40 million who are uninsured but also for the other 210 million Americans the quality of whose health care has been dangerously eroded.