



December 01, 2009 - Topic: Health Care Reform

Profile of Uninsured Man Aims To Personalize Case for Health Care Reform

This week, the **Sacramento Bee** ran a three-part series profiling Tony Andrade, a Sacramento County resident who is among the 37 million working U.S. residents without health insurance who would stand to benefit from the passage of a national health care reform bill.

In the series, the *Bee* follows Andrade's journey through the health care system after he receives a diagnosis for bladder cancer.

Like many of California's seven million uninsured residents, Andrade's income is too high to qualify for Medi Cal, California's Medicaid program. At the same time, private coverage is unaffordable for him, particularly because he has diabetes and other pre-existing conditions that would drive up his premiums.

To receive treatment for his bladder cancer, Andrade enrolled in Sacramento County's County Medically Indigent Services Program. CMISP officials said the program would pay Andrade's future medical bills, provide access to physicians and refer him to specialists (Calvan, *Sacramento Bee*, 11/29).

However, CMISP and other local programs throughout California are struggling to meet the needs of a growing patient population amid severe budget cuts.

At the same time that the recession is driving more people into public programs, state budget cuts are forcing such programs to scale back services and tighten eligibility requirements (Calvan, *Sacramento Bee*, 11/30).

Current health care reform proposals potentially could provide relief for Andrade and others like him by prohibiting insurance companies from denying coverage to people with pre-existing medical conditions (Calvan, *Sacramento Bee*, 12/1). Other proposals would expand eligibility for Medicaid, create a health insurance exchange and provide subsidies to help people buy private coverage (*Sacramento Bee*, 11/30).

In a statement, Max Villalobos, senior vice president of Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in south Sacramento, said that Andrade's situation "illustrates the need for health care reform" (*Sacramento Bee*, 11/29).

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