

ADVOCACY JOURNALISM (Originally published July 1975)

Almost all media inspired special reports on health and medical care in this country tend to focus on the deficiencies, exaggerate the failures and generally promote the notion of crisis and impending government regulation. Therefore, it is unusual to find such an article as the extensive and comprehensive review of health care in America, which appeared in the June 16 issue of *US News & World Report*. The special section dealt with the progress and problems of our medical care and covered nearly all aspects of the how and why of rising costs, the increasing and decreasing incidences of various diseases, mortality rates, hospitals and their management, drugs and drug safety, medical ethics, and a long and informative interview with Dr. Donald Fredrickson, Director of the National Institutes of Health.

We mention this special review because of its balanced and factual reporting and because it covers the broad subject in a straightforward manner without resort to the usual sensationalism, the projected statistic juggling and the scare tactics so common to other slick paper magazines and news periodicals.

It is too bad that so called "advocacy journalism" has become such an in thing with the news media. One suspects that "advocacy" reporting is merely another modern euphemism for what used to be called "slanted" reporting. Such reporting is not hard to recognize, but, in fact, most of us have become so accustomed to it we sometimes complain about the dullness of old fashioned "straight" reporting. Advocacy journalism may have its place on editorial pages or in personal opinion columns, but it is too much subject to bias, prejudice and propaganda efforts to have much value when the objective is to inform or educate an audience.

This recent coverage of America's health care and its problems is well done. In spite of its unadorned prose, *US News & World Report* does a more competent job of factual reporting than any of its gossipy, semi-fictionalized sisters.