



Life-saving decisions shouldn't be dictated by profits

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“A Senate report found Gilead Sciences, which makes a cure for a fatal form of hepatitis, is more interested in profits than patients,” Chip Reid noted on the “CBS Evening News” on Dec. 1. “The cure was invented under the leadership of a celebrated doctor in the Department of Veterans Affairs, but at \$1,000 a pill, even the VA can’t afford to save the lives of veterans who need it.

“The drug claims to cure up to 99 percent of hepatitis C patients,” he continued. “But there’s a catch, the retail price for a 12-week treatment is \$84,000. The Department of Veterans Affairs gets a 50 percent discount, but even with that, the VA can’t afford to give it to everyone who needs it.”

Apparently many of the 230,000 veterans living with the disease were infected while they were on active duty in Vietnam; it was spread by vaccinations and battlefield transfusions – not by illicit drug use.

Oh, and it only costs \$1,400 to produce the full 12-week regimen.

Am I the only one who finds this completely despicable?

We have a therapy for a disease these soldiers acquired while they were serving their country, but now those who sent them in harm’s way say they can’t afford the medication – which was developed by a doctor working for the Veterans Administration.

Personally, I am vehemently opposed to withholding any life-saving drug for purely economic reasons from anyone who needs it. And this is especially true in the case of those who answered the call to serve their country.

Look, I believe in the free market system for most goods and services. Capitalism has obviously contributed to our immense wealth as a nation. But I put health care in a different category than most “goods and services.”

Our priorities are seriously skewed.

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