

# **THE ROAD TO HEALTH CARE REFORM**

**Designing a  
System That Works**

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System That Works**

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To Nicholas and Jon, for their inspiration, patience and support

and

To Becky, whose help during some tough moments  
made this easier

With love

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## PREFACE

No country has all the answers to making its health system work effectively and efficiently. This applies to other countries whose systems are often touted as the answer to the problems we confront in the United States. But it applies equally to ourselves who also do not have all of the answers. Therefore, as we debate health care reform, we must not expect the solution to exist in some other nation, nor can we be so xenophobic as to ignore the lessons—both good and bad—these same nations can offer us.

This book is an attempt to elicit those lessons from the experience of other countries, but to do this within the context of the problems and needs that our system faces. The idea for the book grew out of a recognition that, on the one hand, there were many who saw the answer to the American health care crisis in some other country such as Canada or Germany while, on the other, many people were starting to build an arsenal of reasons why those same systems had failed and were of little relevance to our own

concerns. My purpose was to attempt to bridge the gap between these two armed camps, balancing the reality of what might be learned against the equally important reality of how some things were just not importable, given the historic, cultural, and economic bases of our system.

To accomplish this goal required support, and I am extremely grateful to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, as well as the Esther and Joseph Klingenstein Fund, which helped me turn my idea into a reality. The support was both generous and central to the preparation of the manuscript.

But a manuscript also needs the help and advice of other people. Among them, I would include Dr. Lawrence Brown of the Columbia School of Public Health who has continually provided me with excellent counsel as I bounced many of my crazy ideas off him. In addition, the Dean of that School, Dr. Alan Rosenfield, provided me with both an academic home as well as considerable encouragement during this long process. Further, the many Columbia students who sat through my course each year on "Lessons to be Learned from Other Countries" all served as able counselors and critics. Finally, I am particularly grateful to Ms. Patricia Alfred who had the painful task of converting my often convoluted dictation into a typed manuscript.

Most of all, thanks go to my family. Their inspiration, encouragement, and patience made this arduous process more palatable and productive. To them my thanks and my love.

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