

# How Will Obama's Healthcare Plan Affect Black Men?

By: [John B. Landers](#)

President Obama's healthcare plan is designed for all Americans. However, African American citizens, especially men, have a huge stake in the passage of this bill known as the Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009.

An estimated 7.7 million African Americans are uninsured. African American men have the worse health care record of any group in America.

According to the **Foundation for Health Coverage Education**, a quarter of African American men lack health insurance. Over 21 percent of African American men over the age of 18 do not have a regular source of medical care.

An organization that has been trying to make a difference is Project Brotherhood (PB). It is a nonprofit medical clinic, located on Chicago's Southside that provides a full-range of healthcare services to African American men, such as blood pressure, prostate, and colon cancer screening. The services are made available regardless of their ability to pay.

According to PB, "From the time he is born until he dies, Black males have a shorter life span than their White counterparts and the lowest life expectancy of nearly all racial groups in the United States. African American men have higher rates of hypertension, cancer, diabetes, stroke, and cardiovascular disease, than white men."

The cause for such disparities varies widely, including discrimination, poverty and a higher than average unemployment rate. Since the majority of people who have health care obtain coverage through their employers, Black men are at a particular disadvantage since their unemployment rate is typically higher than for other groups. Obama's healthcare plan not only proposes a government-sponsored option that is less expensive, but it also will provide universal health care for nearly all Americans.

Obama's healthcare plan is intended to operate in conjunction with private health care plans and other medical care options, such as Project Brotherhood. One of the primary benefits of the government's medical plan is the possibility that private health providers may be compelled to offer more competitive medical care in the areas of treatment, management, price and service.

Jimmy W. is 50 years old. A couple of years before losing his job, Jimmy noticed a shortness of breath while carrying out routine activities. The condition became even more pronounced when he worked out, so he made an appointment to visit his doctor.

After a series of tests, he was eventually diagnosed with a genetic heart abnormality. During the course of testing, doctors also surgically discovered a benign

cyst on his liver, which was eventually surgically removed.

Today, he still takes regular medications for the heart condition that landed him in the hospital for ten days. He has since lost his job and insurance coverage and his unemployment benefits are scheduled to run out in several months.

He is a strong advocate of Obama's healthcare plan. Although he was eligible to continue his health care insurance through COBRA, after losing his job, he found the cost too high. "I think COBRA is a bad joke. I didn't do me much good to be eligible for insurance coverage I couldn't afford after losing my job. There was no way I could afford to pay the ridiculous monthly premiums they were asking. Something has to be done to about making health care affordable and available to everyone."

Making health care more affordable is one of the major impetuses behind Obama's healthcare plan.

Since Jimmy has a preexisting condition, the most attractive part of Obama's healthcare plan for his household is the "guaranteed eligibility requirement." This condition may ensure that he and his wife, who operates a child care center out of their home, and is also without healthcare coverage, will finally be able to get some semblance of medical insurance. They are also counting on the premium to be reasonable.

Representative Charles B. Rangel (D-NY), as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, is one of the most powerful politicians in America. He thinks that it is important to restructure the United States health care system in order to get a handle on exorbitant costs. Representative Rangel states that, "affordable health care is the only moral thing to do."

Furthermore, "Healthcare costs are rising out of control, [the] solution is to control costs and put patients first without burdening future generations with debt and threatening the economic well-being of American families and businesses."

John has not had healthcare insurance coverage for nearly ten years. Whenever he has needed health services, he goes to the local public health clinic. He believes that the real motive behind Obama's healthcare plan is, "Uncle Sam's effort to force recipients into following government mandates regarding issues, like vaccinations and birth control."

The uncertainty of the current economic environment has many Black men, who currently have healthcare coverage, concerned about the possibility of what will happen if they were to lose their jobs.

Chuck is gainfully employed as an assistant manager of a grocery store for a regional chain that has recently closed some stores. Although he currently has medical insurance, he supports Obama's healthcare plan because, "I may need the coverage myself the way things are going with jobs out here."

Chuck admits that he must be more diligent about his personal health and take more preventative steps to safeguard his health. He thinks that Obama's healthcare plan effort to encourage a more preventative approach to health is one of the best aspects of the plan.

This issue needs to be addressed, even with men who have healthcare insurance. Project Brotherhood focuses on educating Black men and motivating them to visit clinical sessions to take advantage of the various services by partnering with neighborhood barbers shops. They offer free haircuts, food and transportation to those who need it. Obama's healthcare plan has a preventative health care component that should help in this area