

### There's more to good health than health care



Because so much of the national discussion lately has centered on health, the Affordable Care Act and its troubles, you might think that health insurance is all that matters when it comes to making people healthy. It isn't. That good health is more than health care was a point I heard many times on my recent Fulbright fellowship visit to Canada, and it's a topic we don't talk much about in the U.S.

I visited a doctor in Toronto who has created a simple brochure—he calls it a poverty tool—to help doctors think about poverty during office visits and help their patients cope. For example, the tool tells docs to factor poverty into an assessment of a patient's risk factors, say for diabetes.

The Canadian Medical Association held town hall meetings this year in several cities, and participants identified nutrition and food security, income, housing and early childhood development as the main drivers of good health.

A major Canadian study has found that providing private apartments for homeless people who are mentally ill has made a difference in the quality of their lives and social functioning. Plus, they are using more health services in their communities rather than in more expensive hospitals. Redirecting services to less expensive community facilities is a goal in Canada as well as in the U.S.

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