

Economics, Politics and Patient Care:
Who is Really Being Hurt?

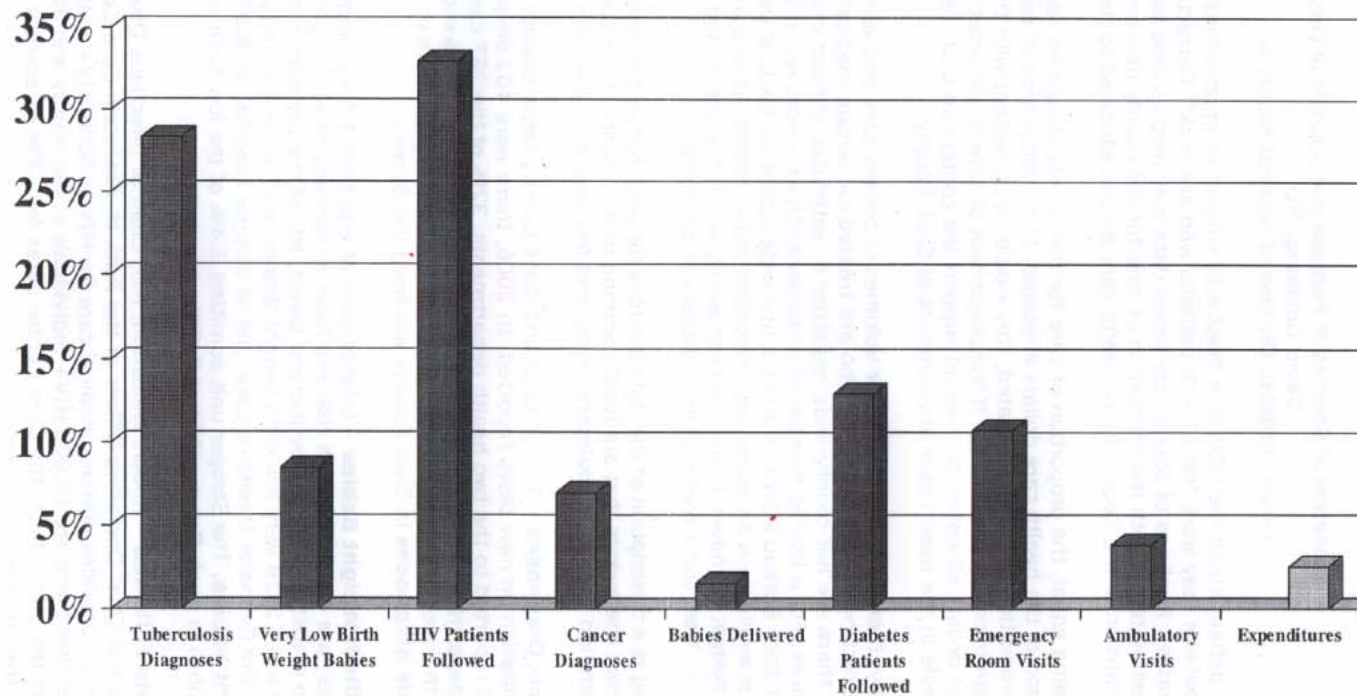
Simon Piller, MD

Cook County Bureau of Health Services

Cook County Bureau of Health Services

- Four Hospitals
- Approximately dozen free-standing clinics
- Extensive subspecialty clinic system
- Public Health Clinics

CCBHS's Proportion of County-Wide Care and Health Expenditures



CCBHS Statistics:	141 cases	118 babies	6K patients	1,714 cases	1,200 babies	40K patients	230K visits	747K	\$810M
County-wide statistics:	403 cases	1391 babies	18K patients	25,280 cases	78,571 babies	307K patients	2.14M visits	19.6M	\$32.2B

Objectives

- 1) What happened and how it happened
- 2) The context of the cuts
- 3) The effect on patients, staff, community
- 4) The Fight Back

2006 Chicago's 'Katrina'

Racist Hurricane hits Chicago's Health Care

Ambulatory clinics cut in half.

Clinics and hospitals crippled with layoffs,
transfers, early retirements, and
resignations

Long term care at Oak Forest Hospital
eliminated

Advanced practice nurses laid off

More Cuts

OB/Gyn Department decimated with loss of accreditation of its residency program at Stroger Hospital.

Clinic visits down to 550,000 from 800,000 previous year.

These cuts were brutal.

82% of Cook County's patients are black or Latino.

Long Term Care patients at Oak Forest were shipped out to other facilities, including nursing homes. Some were even on ventilators. Reportedly, a few died.

Undocumented Long Term Care patients were threatened with deportation on ventilators.

Who are the Patients?

Uninsured in Cook County have increased
36% over the past 10 years.

Diabetes deaths increased 87% and
hospitalizations increased 16% over the
last 5 years.

(<http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/>)

What was the attitude of the top administrator of these cut?

Chief of the Cook County Bureau of Health Services Robert Simon said "I did not come here to help the bum on the street-- the alcoholic or drug addict who comes to the ER 40 times a year just to get a place to sleep. I didn't come here for 'the homeless.'"

“Most of the homeless really don't care about themselves or are psychiatrically impaired.

You can give them any opportunity in the world, and they would not take advantage of it.

They could do things for themselves, but they won't. So who the hell cares about them? To me, society wastes enormous energy, money, and resources on them.”

Staff Intimidation

The top four doctors at Cermak Hospital were summarily fired when they publically criticized the cuts.

The Family Practice was eliminated from Stroger Hospital in keeping with minimzation of primary care.

Todd Stroger and Dr. Robert Simon



Context: WAR AND RACISM

- FUNDING OF IRAQ WAR FOR ONE DAY COULD SOLVE THE BUDGET
- Perceptions of who uses the county health services: Black and immigrant workers.
- Reality of who uses and why the benefits will help beyond the direct users.
- Increasing attacks on immigrant workers by 'la migra'

Connected Events

- Militarization of failing schools
- Dismantling of public housing
- Loss of job and insurance
- ‘Wallet-ectomies’ and collections

Another housing project torn down on Chicago's West Side



Cycles of Struggle and Events

- 1866 Cook County Hospital formed
- 1886 The Haymarket Rebellion, May Day
 - hospital expansion
 - 1885 First appendectomy
 - 1890 Sickle Cell anemia discovered



Cycles cont.

- 1937 Great Depression and Flint Sit Down Strike
 - World's First Blood Bank built
- 1950s : Post World War II strike wave in coal, steel etc. 1948 Chinese Revolution
 - Major expansion of County's services with Cook County Hospital at 3,400 beds.
- 1960s Rebellions against Vietnam, racism
 - First trauma unit in US built at Cook County

More cycles

- 1970s-80s Nurses and doctors strike and formation of the House Staff union.
 - Followed ultimately by expansion of outpatient care, and new hospital (Stroger Hospital, 2002)
- 2006-7 Weakening of unions and demoralization.
 - Crippling cuts to Cook County system.



The Fight Back

- Board meeting protests of early 2007
- Attempted coalition of staff, patients, and community
- Unions (AFSCME, SEIU, NNOC)



Struggle against cuts in Cook County Health System

January, 2007



Next Steps

- Combat racism and educate the population
- Forming alliances for common goals.
- Recognizing the nature of the way society is structured –e.g. Profit before people.
- Learning from other systems– e.g. health care in China then and now (national health)
- Collecting outcomes data

Freudenberg, N et al: The Impact of New York City's 1975 Fiscal Crisis on the Tuberculosis, HIV, and Homicide Syndemic. *Am J Public Health* 2006; 96:424-34.

“In 1975 New York City experienced a fiscal crisis...”

