

Dr. Emerita Gueson: Stop the 'Holocaust' of Managed Care

by Marianna Wertz

The battle to ameliorate the ravages of managed care in America has been going on almost from the first day Congress voted up a subsidy for it, and President Richard Nixon signed it into law in 1973. But not until May of this year, with Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche's call for the banning of health maintenance organizations (HMOs), has there been real leadership for a movement to ban managed care altogether, and to return to the approach to health care which this nation embraced with the passage of the Hill-Burton Act of 1946.

Pennsylvania gynecologist Dr. Emerita Gueson, having witnessed the death and devastation that it has wrought among her own clients, has been calling for a ban on managed care since the mid-1990s. On her own, she has been suing managed-care companies and the state of Pennsylvania, using the power of existing law against what she calls "the Second Holocaust"—only this time, she adds, "it's directed at everyone."

Dr. Gueson has researched the legal records of Pennsylvania's managed-care companies, and compiled a lengthy list of case histories, with details of the atrocities which managed care leaves in its wake. She published these histories, together with her observations on the "homicidal behavior" of the HMOs, in *Survival Guide for HMO Patients* and *Do HMO's Cut Costs . . . and Lives*, which publications, unfortunately, are not currently available, because they are the subject of her suit against Aetna-US Healthcare.

So when one of Dr. Gueson's patients brought her LaRouche's May 2000 pamphlet, "Ban the HMOs Now! Before They Get You and Yours," she naturally called the campaign to get more pamphlets for her patients and their networks, and to get *EIR* her story.

More Deaths than Vietnam

In her June 3 interview with *EIR*, which follows, Dr. Gueson discussed the research she undertook into HMO legal records. By discovering why patients are suing HMOs, she was able to piece together a hard-evidence indictment of managed care. Dr. Gueson said that, if this same investigation were carried out for the whole country, "probably they've killed more than the whole Vietnam War."

When she sent these case histories to Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge (R) (now mooted to be George W. Bush's Vice-Presidential running-mate), he did not respond to her, but he

tried to get her license to practice medicine revoked. She says that Ridge should be impeached, or even jailed, as responsible for forcing Pennsylvania's elderly and poor into managed care, and for forcing the state's doctors to subsidize the CATFUND (the Medical Catastrophic Fund, into which doctors must pay in order to cover the cost of malpractice suits against them and the insurance companies).

In a 1997 letter to Ridge (whose principal campaign contributor was Aetna-US Healthcare CEO Leonard Abramson), enclosing the case studies of HMO victims (see below), Dr. Gueson wrote, "If you still don't vote for an anti-HMO bill and abolish the CATFUND, after reading the lists I have provided you, then you deserve to be recalled, to be impeached, to be voted out of office, or to be advertised in the Hall of Shame in the HMO page of the Internet."

As to Ridge's political ambitions, Dr. Gueson said that his vice-presidential bid must be stopped. She called *EIR*'s attention to the fact that Ridge is not even permitted to speak to his own Catholic diocese, in Erie County, under a policy in place in many dioceses, that any Catholic politician who holds views differing from the professed view of the Church (Ridge is pro-abortion), is not permitted to be honored by, or to speak in functions of that diocese. So much for Ridge's supposed "Catholic credentials" as a calling-card for Bush.

Dr. Gueson told *EIR* that she is optimistic that managed care will die out because of its own evil over time. However, she added, its very existence is a symptom of a greater problem, against which Americans must continue to fight. "The success of HMOs is clearly a symptom of a morally warped, ailing society which is crying for help."

By organizing to ban managed care now, we can provide that help in a direct, tangible form.

Case Histories

We reprint here the summary of 23 case histories, taken from the legal records of US Healthcare Systems of PA, in Dr. Gueson's *Survival Guide for HMO Patients*:

1. Two unnecessary postpartum deaths due to "Flesh-Eating Bacteria" (Necrotizing Fasciitis) caused by premature discharge.
2. A young man lost part of his genitalia due to the "Flesh-Eating Bacteria" due to his premature post-operative discharge.
3. Twins *in utero* die by double decapitation due to failure

to follow up with ultrasound testing (inappropriate denial of testing).

4. Four patients died of a heart attack due to capitation (inadequate cardiac work-up). [Capitation is the HMO practice in which a flat rate is paid to a primary care doctor (the “gatekeeper”), per person per month, which is supposed to cover all medical care the patient needs, with tight control over prescription drugs, and referrals for specialists or tests. Doctors are financially penalized if they allow their patients to see too many specialists.]

5. A young woman lapsed into a coma due to capitation (inadequate cardiac work-up).

6. A young man lapsed into a coma due to capitation (inappropriate denial of referral to hospital emergency room).

7. Three mentally ill patients committed suicide (due to capitation). One of them killed his own son.

8. A pregnant woman died of Eclampsia due to delayed admission (capitation).

9. Two stillborn babies were delivered due to withholding of testing (capitation).

10. A woman in her early forties died of previously undiagnosed malignant Melanoma, due to the fact that the excised mole was not sent for pathological examination (no testing—capitation).

11. Three women had delay in diagnosis of breast cancer. One of them died. All were victims of capitation.

12. Delay in diagnosis of three types of cancer, in two female patients—cancer of stomach and choriocarcinoma—and in a male patient, cancer of the larynx. There is always delay in the diagnosis of cancer because of delay in obtaining referral.

13. Delay in diagnosis of ruptured, inflamed appendix and obstruction of colon due to inappropriately delayed referral of two women.

14. Inappropriate denial of referral to a specialist of a patient with Subacute Bacterial Endocarditis, resulting in motor and speech impairment.

15. US Healthcare Systems of PA trying to dictate the treatment of a patient with T-cell Lymphoma (direct liability).

16. Undiagnosed pregnancy resulting in fetal demise.

17. Birth injury due to HMO dictating on Cesarean section rate (Erb’s Palsy).

18. A baby developed cerebral palsy due to amnionitis following premature delivery at 32 weeks.

19. Another baby developed cerebral palsy due to delayed and inadequate testing prior to mother’s delivery at term.

20. Accidental death of a drug rehabilitation patient who was discharged prematurely.

21. Post-operative injury of a post-splenectomy patient resulting in total urinary incontinence.

22. Patient was complaining of chest pain. An EKG [electrocardiogram] was done. No further testing was done. As a result of withholding testing, he continues to suffer.

23. Patient had cervical abscess. Physician refused to authorize treatment to a non-participating Spinal Cord Trauma

Center. Patient arrived at the designated hospital already a quadriplegic.

(For hundreds of more such managed-care case histories from around the country, the reader is referred to the Internet website www.his.com/~pico/1-25.htm.)

Interview: Dr. Emerita T. Gueson

‘I Cannot Practice Medicine Like This’

Dr. Emerita T. Gueson, a Philadelphia gynecologist, is a devoted practitioner of medicine and fervent advocate of patients’ rights. She graduated from the University of Santo Thomas in the Philippines. She had her rotating internship at Germantown Hospital, and her General Practice residency at Community General Hospital, in Reading, Pennsylvania. In addition to her Obstetrics and Gynecology residency training, she took a year of Gynecologic Pathology and Cytology at Philadelphia General Hospital. In 1970, Dr. Gueson was a gynecological research consultant on herpes simplex at the University of Pennsylvania Dental School. She is presently on the medical staff of Holy Redeemer and Nazareth Hospitals. The interview was conducted by Marianna Wertz on June 3.

EIR: You’ve been advocating the elimination of managed care for several years. Could you say why you want to see managed care done away with?

Dr. Gueson: This all started when my mother suddenly became ill. This was in 1986. I met a lot of people, while we were taking support-group therapy. When you are with an HMO, if you have a stroke, they admit you for one day, then they start calling the hospital, to get you moved to the hospital where they have a contract. They dictate how many days you can stay, even if you are not well yet.

EIR: So it was not through your own practice, but through your mother’s treatment that you first encountered managed care?

Dr. Gueson: No. My mother didn’t have any problem, because she had good insurance. She had Blue Cross/Blue Shield. What bothered me is that other patients were having problems. I’m doing this for them, for the public, because I know my way around with this health care.

EIR: In *Survival Guide*, you give numerous case histories, documenting how the implementation of managed care in Pennsylvania has cost lives and destroyed lives.

Dr. Gueson: It’s bad. A lot of doctors are closing their of-

DO HMO'S CUT COSTS ...AND LIVES?

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Dr. Emerita Gueson's 1997 report, which exposes the killing that is being carried out under "managed care."

fices. They cannot afford it. This is a civil rights violation, because we are being denied economic freedom. I'm going to challenge the law. It's unconstitutional. In Pennsylvania, it's terrible, the HMOs have perpetual credentialing. I reported this to the Insurance Commissioners and the Director of Health, and nobody did anything.

EIR: In 1996, Lyndon LaRouche said that Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge should be impeached for Nuremberg crimes.

Dr. Gueson: He should. I wrote him a letter, that he should be impeached.

EIR: You have also called managed care "the second Holocaust."

Dr. Gueson: Right, it's true.

EIR: What has happened to you as a result of what you've done?

Dr. Gueson: US Healthcare, because I think someone gave them a copy of my first book, *Doctors Under Fire, What's Wrong with HMOs*, they did not want me. They terminated me with Aetna, once they bought it [Aetna merged with US Healthcare in 1998]. Then they kept on inviting me, soliciting me, because patients were asking for me. So I applied, because my patients wanted me to apply, so I could protect their interests.

EIR: Do you have any managed-care patients now?

Dr. Gueson: Yes, because Blue Shield lets me do what I want. They know I will sue them if they don't let me. I do the lawsuits myself. I study at night. Everybody's afraid of them.

EIR: Mr. LaRouche is organizing a movement to shut down managed care altogether. To ban it. LaRouche would like to return to the principles of the Hill-Burton Act of 1946 as the

approach to medicine. It basically said that the number of hospital beds should be capable of providing adequate hospital services for the whole population. That's the exact opposite of what managed care is doing today.

Dr. Gueson: What they try to do is close the beds, and patients are being discharged prematurely. And they die. A lot of deaths.

EIR: Both Bush and Gore are for managed care.

Dr. Gueson: I know. That's why people are upset. Ridge wants to run as Vice President. We have to stop him.

EIR: We have to intensify this fight.

Dr. Gueson: I'm going to tell my patients to distribute your pamphlet in their neighborhoods.

EIR: You attribute your ability to withstand this fight to your "life of faith," through which, you say, you developed moral courage and "the dignity of the human spirit." Could you expand on that?

Dr. Gueson: If you suffer, the more you suffer, your faith gets stronger, and you mature intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. While this was all going on, I was doing the research on the book, Ridge tried to get me suspended, because they [her fellow physicians] could not get anybody to lead the lawsuits against the CATFUND. So, they got me; so I got it started. It's the way I was brought up. My mother was a very strong woman.

I am Catholic. When everything goes downhill, what is left is your faith, and your sense of humor!

EIR: How does managed care affect doctors?

Dr. Gueson: These doctors are just giving up. Yesterday, I met a doctor who's going to close his office. He has no job. They are depriving doctors of the right to make a living. Those who injure patients — the HMOs should be charged with fraud with malice, because they know these doctors are bad and they are marketing them. It's terrible, and patients have no knowledge of what's going on. That's why a national data-bank should be available to the public. These HMOs have flourished because the doctors did not stand up. The doctors are greedy, too.

They were banking that I would be afraid, because everybody is afraid. But if you feel you have been wronged, you have to stand up for what's right. And you should be willing to suffer. My friends said, "You're going to sue Ridge and the Attorney General, but they are so powerful." I said, "I am more powerful, because God is with me."

I can't stand what they are doing to people. But, if I don't do anything, I am just as bad as them. They are trying to deprive me of my right to practice my profession.

They should not have touched the medical system, which was working. They should only have fixed what wasn't working. When I saw the HMO law signed by Nixon, I said to myself, "I cannot practice like this."