The Universal Human Right to Healthcare: Finite Resources and Conflicts of Human Rights Must Limit the Human Right to Healthcare in Order for It to be Sensible in the Real World

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Human rights activists claim that healthcare is a human right and as a human right, individuals everywhere ought to be afforded it. Failure to at least strive to provide healthcare to all, advocates maintain, is unethical and actually undermines the human rights system. However, many opponents argue that claiming a right to healthcare is nonsensical because equal healthcare for all cannot be achieved in today's society; at least not without placing intolerable burdens on the medical industry. In this paper, I attempt to stake out a middle position between these two extremes. On one hand, I argue that there is a right to healthcare, ultimately based not on the practicality or achievability of addressing the right, but on the grounds of inherent human dignity, and this right does need to be acknowledged and protected. On the other hand, pragmatically, the right to healthcare must be limited because we live in a world of finite resources and human energy. When determining the amount of healthcare an individual can rightfully demand, we must consider two major limitations: practical limitations to provision such as limited resources, and the tension between the human rights of medical caretakers and the opposing rights of the patients.

Information about the Author:
Trisha Wladecki is a junior pre-med student who is also in Christ College. This paper is her honors thesis, emerging from an intensified study of a class entitled Human Rights: Politics, Ethics, and Law.

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