



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

DEVELOPMENT OF A WELLNESS SOCIETY MAY PREVENT DISABILITY

A forum was held at the Center for American Progress (CAP) on “The Political Ideology of the Millennial Generation”. Presenters at the forum were co-directors of the Progressive Studies Program at CAP, researchers on public policy and the director of Campus Progress—a student group interested in political activity. A participant was a political scientist who had lived in Europe and studied the domestic policies of European countries.

Summary

The U.S. and the European Union (EU) governments have basic political and economic differences in their approaches to addressing the needs to vulnerable populations via safety net programs. First, all countries in the EU have universal health care. Some EU countries have free access to health care, while in other countries, citizens pay for services but are reimbursed by the government. In addition, there is a well-developed safety net that protects social and environmental determinants of health, whether people are employed or not. Consequently, the focus is on population-based health, not on making financial arrangements to pay for “sick care.” Private markets function in these countries for people who want boutique services above and beyond those provided by governments. There is no confrontation in Europe over government health programs.

Disability Prevention Issues

The U.S. is 37th in the world on overall measures of health. Ethnic and racial minorities, women and people with disabilities lack adequate health services in the U.S. and millions more Americans have no health insurance at all. These conditions place barriers between vulnerable populations and timely health care, and may result in diminished health that can contribute to disability.

Intervention

A letter was sent to the European political scientist confirming the interview on comparative differences of social determinants of public health between the U.S. and European Union countries.

Recommendation

The U.S. should develop public and acute care health systems that improve the health of the U.S. population to the point that U.S. morbidity and mortality rates comparable to the leading countries of the European Union.