

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE COMMITTEE CALLS FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE

Co-chair Mary Sue Coleman: 'No excuse for delay'

Claiming “there is no justifiable excuse for delay,” University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman, Ph.D., speaking on behalf of the 16-member Institute of Medicine Committee on the Consequences of Uninsurance, urged that work begin immediately on a plan for providing universal health coverage to everyone in the U.S. by 2010.

On January 14 at a press briefing in Washington, D.C., Coleman presented results from the Institute of Medicine’s final report documenting the economic, social and personal consequences of not providing health insurance to 43 million uninsured Americans. The report is the culmination of three years of work by the IOM committee, which was co-chaired by President Coleman and Arthur Kellerman, M.D., M.P.H., professor and chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Emory University’s School of Medicine. The committee’s report emphasizes that the consequences of uninsurance, in economic as well as health care delivery terms, affect everyone in America, not just those without health coverage.

“Lack of health insurance in the United States is a critical problem that can and should be eliminated,” says Coleman. “Achieving universal coverage will require federal leadership and support.” The committee advanced what it called five guiding principles for any proposed solutions to insuring all Americans:

- health care coverage should be universal;
- it should be continuous;
- it should be affordable to individuals and families;
- the strategy for health insurance should be affordable and sustainable for society;
- health insurance should promote access to high-quality care that is effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient-centered and equitable.

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The committee’s full report is available online at www.iom.edu/report.asp?id=17632.

—SFP



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