

Health Care Programs

President Ronald Reagan may have some difficult choices in the health field in the early days of his Administration, and the choices may be even more difficult because of the likely contestants in the health arena.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard Schweiker, the former senator from Pennsylvania, and David Stockman, who heads the Office of Management and Budget and is a former congressman from Michigan, do not agree on health matters. Stockman favors dismantling many programs, while Schweiker wants them reshaped gradually.

Schweiker, who was ranking minority member on the Human Resources Committee and its Health Subcommittee and the top Republican member of the Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee, worked closely with Democrats on many health initiatives. As sponsor of the pro-competitive health insurance bill, Schweiker has favored the use of tax incentives and employer-paid health care plans along with some catastrophic protection.

Stockman is sponsor of a pro-competitive deregulation bill that would eliminate the Professional Standards Review Organization program, utilization review, uniform reporting requirements, the health planning program, and Federal assistance to and regulation of health maintenance organizations.

Health Professions Education

Health professions education legislation died with the end of the 96th Congress—one of the many leftovers that will have to be handled by the new Congress.

The House and Senate bills were the

victims of personal and philosophical differences that turned out to be irreconcilable.

Because the health manpower law has expired, the dozens of grant and loan programs are being kept alive at fiscal 1980 levels through the continuing appropriations system.

This state of limbo may well continue a while longer. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R, UT), chairman of the Senate Human Resources Committee, is thinking seriously about a simple one-year extension of the manpower authorization, to give the Reagan Administration time to formulate its policies. That course of action would mean that health professional programs will limp along for the second consecutive year without real direction.

There are plenty of options available to Reagan, as seen by the different directions taken by the House and Senate last year. In the House, the path chosen was to maintain the status quo for student health support programs while passing out capitation grants.

In the Senate, the bill created a new program of service contingent loans to replace NHSC scholarships gradually. A service contingent loan could be repaid through actual service if there were a national need for a specific type of health professional and if Congress appropriated funds. Otherwise, students would repay loans with interest.

Nurse Midwives

Certified nurse midwives, working in conjunction with physicians, can service the public in a safe, cost-effective way, a number of witnesses testified before the House Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. But nurse midwives are harassed by government and local offi-

cial and misconceptions by the public have hampered the nation's nurse midwives in their practice, the witnesses said. The economic competition they represent, the panel was told, prompts physicians to pressure local officials to regulate nurse midwives to the point where they cannot practice.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists told the subcommittee that it supports the use of nurse midwives as part of the health care team serving a pregnant woman, but rejects the idea of a nurse midwife's directing that team.

Home Health Care Bill

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R, UT), chairman of the Human Resources Committee in the new Congress, has introduced legislation to expand home health coverage.

One provision of the bill would expand the role of hospitals in providing community home health services under Medicare. Another provision would permit proprietary home health agencies to participate in Medicare without being licensed by a state.

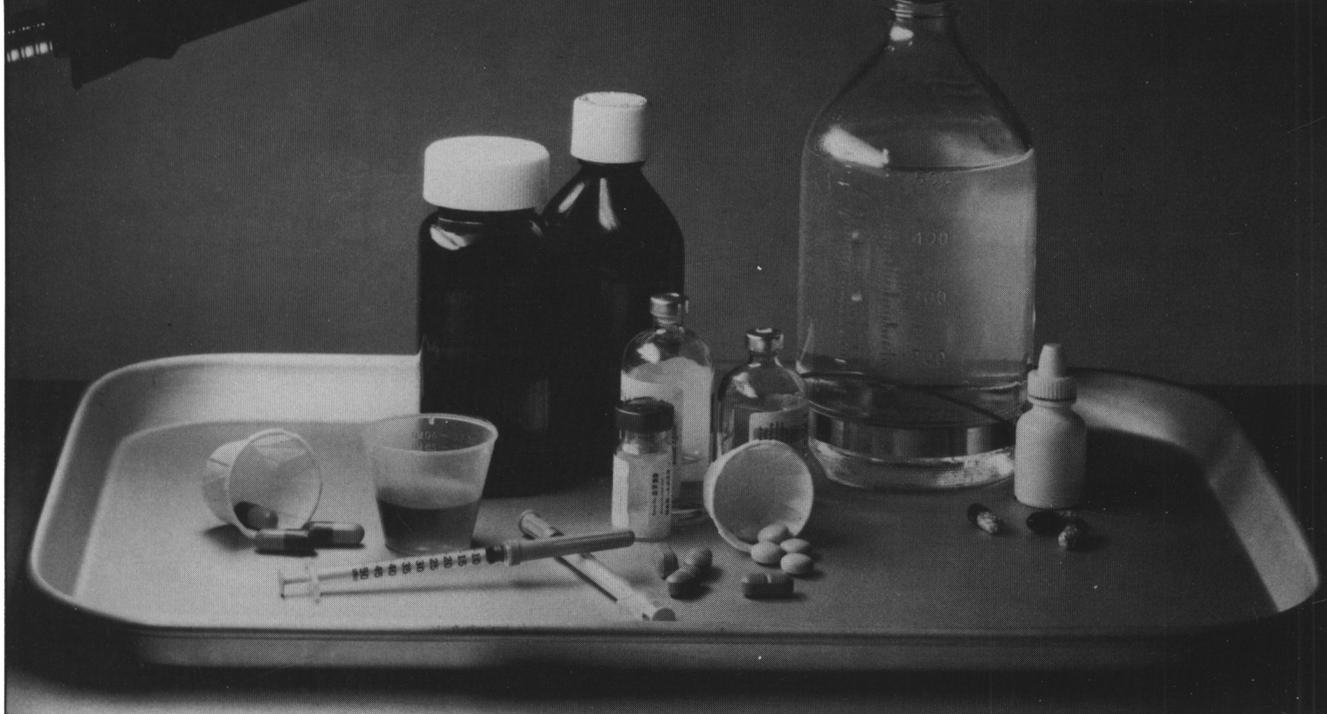
Hatch said that both the Human Resources Committee and the Senate Finance Committee should include home health care near the top of their legislative hearing and action agendas for 1981.

Publication on Nurse Shortages

The National Foundation for Long Term Health Care has published a collection of papers on nurse recruitment and retention in long-term care. Topics covered in the publication relate to the current nurse shortages in nursing homes. The 241-page volume costs \$6 and may be obtained from the foundation at 1200 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

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