A great story

by Jack Burgess

I was one of the lucky ones in the emergency room that day. Not that I had survived a heart problem. Most people who get to the E.R. quickly do survive. Lucky because when the doctor said, "Be sure to follow up with your cardiologist," I could say, okay. The man in the next bed wasn't so lucky. When told to follow up with his doctor, he said, "Which I won't, because I don't have health care." With heart problems, you can't just go home and hope for the best. Patients used to be told to take it easy, but now, we're told to exercise. However, attempting more exercise can be tricky with heart disease.

This is where the cardiac nurses come in. If you have Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance that covers it, you can get up to 36 sessions under the watchful eyes of the cardiac rehab nurses. They will also give you lots of information about how to stay heart-healthy through what you eat. It's very physical, using several exercise machines to work your legs and arms in ways you should do more of to stay healthy, but probably don't, or you probably wouldn't be in rehabilitation.

They don't ask you to do anything you can't do, though, and after awhile you start feeling better, stronger, and-be careful with this one-hungrier. Stick to the healthy treats, like fruits, nuts, vegetables, and whole grains, and you'll be okay.

Sadly, about 50 million Americans have no health care insurance, so they don't get rehab care, or any care outside the emergency room. As a veteran and a lifelong flag-flyer, I love America, but we are the only major country in that position. Some overly macho men make fun of France because they wouldn't help with our Iraq war-though they had saved us during the American Revolution and gave us the Statue of Liberty. But in France, they have much more health care coverage than we do. Not only is everyone covered, but when new mothers come home from the hospital, they get an aide to come and help with the extra housework. In Germany, as in France, doctors still make house calls. In Britain, patients have no deductibles or co-pays, under a system which is fairly called "socialized medicine."

Several U.S. Presidents, going back to Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930's, wanted some form of universal health care coverage, but powerful business interests, and some in the medical community, have managed to block it. President Clinton had a health care plan, but failed to get it through Congress. Previously, President Nixon, a Republican, had came up with the idea of requiring every American of working age to buy health care through private insurance, and this approach was adopted by the legislature in Massachusetts a few years ago and signed into law by then Governor Romney.

Candidate Obama vowed to establish a plan of comprehensive health care. Some suggested we adopt the British model, and call it Medicare for All. Others urged a hybrid plan, with people having a "public option," which would be like Medicare by choice. But with his leadership, the Congress adopted the Affordable Health Care Act-known as Obamacare-modeled on Massachusetts.

Today's Republican Party, unlike the Republicans of Nixon's time, rejects all attempts at universal health care. They call it socialism, claim it will cost too much, and so forth. The same Republicans want to end Medicare as we know it, to be replaced with a "voucher" system in which we'd get a certificate or coupon for a limited amount of care.

As you get older, you and your loved ones need more health care. I've visited a lot of hospitals and medical facilities for myself and members of my family. A few years ago, I served on a Governor's Commission on Health Care Costs. The nurses and other health care people of

Ohio have been great, and for all the advertising, they are more alike than different.

Here's hoping all of tomorrow's patients get the care I've gotten. But that will depend on what the U.S. Supreme Court rules on The Affordable Care Act-and how we vote in November.

Jack Burgess is a retired Ohio teacher and writer.