

**Q: Did an emergency-room physician in a Tennessee hospital say the new health care law is currently denying dialysis to some Medicare patients, and will deny care to those over 75 in 2013?**

**A: No. A spokesman for the hospital says the doctor never said the things attributed to her in a chain email, and they are not true. A guest in the doctor's home fabricated the account.**

### **FULL QUESTION**

This email seems like hooey. Can you investigate? Thanks.

I had one of the most troubling, most disturbing conversations ever with Julie's sister-in-law, Dr. Suzanne Allen, head of emergency services at the Johnson City Medical Center in Tennessee.

We were discussing the "future" and I asked her had she seen any affects of Obama Care in her work?

"Oh, yes. We are seeing cutbacks throughout the services we provide. For example, we are now having to deal with patients who would normally receive dialysis can no longer be accepted. In the past, there was always automatic approval under Medicare for anyone who needed dialysis — not anymore." So, what will be their outcome? "They will die soon without dialysis," she stated.

[? Click to expand/collapse the full text ?](#)

This applies to major operations such as receiving stents, bypass surgery, kidney operations, or

treating for an aneurysm that would be normally covered under Medicare today. In other words, if you needed a life-saving operation, Medicare will not provide coverage anymore after 2013 if you are 75 or over. When in 2013? “We haven’t been given a specific date — could be in January or July....but it’s after the election.”

This is shocking to any of us who will be 75 this year. Her advice — get healthy and stay healthy. We do not know the specifics of the actual implementation of the full Obama Care policies and procedures — “they haven’t filtered down to the local level yet. But we are already seeing severe cuts in what we provide to the elderly — we refused dialysis to an individual who was 78 just the other day....we refused to give stents to a gentleman who was in his late 80s.” Every day, she said, we are seeing these cutbacks aimed at reducing care across the board for anyone who is over 75.

We can only hope that Obama Care will be overturned by the Supreme Court— otherwise, this is a death sentence to those who are over 75....perhaps you should pass this on to your friends who are thinking of voting for Obama this year.

Regardless if you have private health care coverage now (I have Aetna Medicare Part B) — it will no longer apply after 2013 if the Ethics Panels disapprove of a procedure that may save your life. Scary, scary, scary. Think about this? You? Your parents? Your loved ones?

Didn’t know about it? Of course, not. As Nancy Pelosi said....”well, if you want to know what’s in the bill, you’ll have to read it.....” After it was passed.

This is a graphic reminder of the need to stay healthy. Get your plot now at Forest Lawn....while they last. Is this a death sentence to those of us who will reach 75?.....Yes!

## **FULL ANSWER**

The frightening claims in this email about losing control of one’s health care decisions have caused consternation among some of our readership — particularly the fear of losing all health care after age 75. But fear not, this email is bunkum.

The email presents a veneer of authenticity. There is, in fact, a [Johnson City Medical Center](#) . It is a not-for-profit center located in Johnson City, Tenn., that serves as “a safety net hospital caring for the uninsured.” And there is a [Dr. Suzanne Allen](#) who works in emergency medicine at that center. But that is where any truth to this email ends.

We contacted Ed Herbert, a representative for the Johnson City Medical Center. He confirmed to us that the conversation quoted in the email is fraudulent. According to Herbert, a guest of Dr. Allen’s home created the untrue email to further a political point.

**Ed Herbert, April 19:** The conversation is not true. The originator of the blog/email was a guest in Dr. Allen’s home. He is using Dr. Allen’s name and that of Johnson City Medical Center (JCMC) to wrongly promote his political position. ...[Dr. Allen] was very upset that the individual would fabricate a conversation about healthcare reform and use her name to add credibility to his position.

The statements attributed to Dr. Allen were not said, the statements about Johnson City Medical Center are not true. The healthcare reform law, according to Dr. Allen, does not change the way in which she cares for her patients. From a hospital point of view, if there has been any effect from the healthcare reform law, it has been increased access for patients.

In addition to weaving a yarn based on a fake conversation with a doctor, the email is also factually inaccurate in its claims about the health care law. Nowhere in the thousands of pages of the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#) passed in 2010 is there any mention of “ethics panels.” In addition to that, the law makes no mention of *any* provisions specifically affecting those 75 and older.

These panels are a relabeling of the infamous “death panels” used by detractors of the law two years ago. As we have said [several times before](#) , there are no death panels in the health care law. A provision to have Medicare cover the cost of optional end-of-life counseling spurred the claim, but was dropped from the bill before passage.

Others have claimed an Independent Payment Advisory Board created by the law will be charged with rationing care. The 15-member IPAB — made up of doctors and medical professionals, economists and health care management experts, and representatives for consumers and seniors — is tasked with finding ways to reduce the growth in Medicare spending. But as we have noted [before](#), the law explicitly says that the IPAB’s proposals “shall not include any recommendation to ration health care, raise revenues or Medicare beneficiary premiums ... increase Medicare beneficiary costsharing (including deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments), or otherwise restrict benefits or modify eligibility criteria.” (See page 490.)

While this cock-and-bull story has spread well beyond its origin in Tennessee, there is no validity to the claims it makes and readers should feel free to purge it from their inboxes.

– *Scott Blackburn*

## Sources

Herbert, Ed, a spokesman for the Johnson City Medical Center. Email sent to FactCheck.org. 19 Apr 2012.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. [Pub. L. 111-148](#) . Enacted 23 Mar 2010.

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