

Ad Place your ad here. Click triangle to begin. ◀ ?

## Commentary | Why health care access is vital to community well-being



Although the Affordable Care Act has expanded coverage to complement private insurances, there are still millions of Americans who go without coverage. (Getty Images)

By **IRMA COTA**

NOVEMBER 15, 2017, 4:30 PM

**E**very human being deserves to live in a society where basic needs are met in order to be a self-realized and productive citizen. Access to health services, food, shelter, education and a safe environment is paramount to well-being. Every individual citizen of the world should expect their right to a healthy environment to be promoted and protected.

Why?

The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. One of the organization's guiding principles is "the enjoyment of

the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political beliefs, economic or social condition”

**Related:** [Why better safety net system needed in health care](#)

**Related:** [Why health care is a basic human right](#)

**Related:** [Right vs. privilege question in health care is false choice](#)

Advanced societies such as the U.S. and developed countries’ have crafted laws for the protection of individual and societal health to protect from the common dangers such as communicable diseases. We have expanded health care coverage through the Affordable Care Act to complement private insurances, Medicaid and Medicare. However, there are still millions of Americans who go without coverage that facilitates access to health services that provide the medical care and educational services they need to make informed decisions about their health. Unfortunately, we have educational and socioeconomic barriers that prevent people from achieving a high standard of health. People struggling financially find it difficult to maintain or improve their health and well-being, or prevent the deterioration of their health.

While we debate the merits of “right vs. privilege,” we understand that there is an intersection of individual health and community health. Without a balance between these two a community is in danger of contagion contributing to an unhealthy environment affecting the population. This is a major drive for public health officials and government to devise protective laws and programs to safeguard the health of its population.

As San Diego is experiencing an outbreak of hepatitis A primarily among its homeless population. This and the  
 nders that access to timely preventive health and  
 is essential to individual well-being and to society  
 1ch as the United States of America to invest in  
 individual and public health systems if we want the next generation of our children to have the ability to live  
 harmoniously and achieve their fullest potential.

**Cota** is CEO of North County Health Services.

Copyright © 2017, The San Diego Union-Tribune

**Support Quality Journalism**

Subscribe for only 99¢

**START TRIAL** ›