



Practicing the Medicine He Preaches: The Free Market Charity of Ron Paul

"He said, as far as the bill," Williams [continued](#) in the RevolutionPAC advertisement, "he would take care of everything. Which he did. I never got a bill from the hospital or anything. And he was a doctor of medicine and that's what he was doing, was practicing medicine. And it didn't matter who, and what, and why. He was doing it because he'd think of one human being just as much as another. He's just an honest man, and that's something we need now in this day and time."



It's a moving advertisement, but it could be argued that any SuperPAC can create an emotional ad for the candidate they back.

In this case, however, the video was an insight into the ordinary way the country doctor-turned-presidential candidate operated for decades in his obstetric practice. The famously free-market doctor was [excoriated by leftists](#) after a [September 12 debate](#) where moderator Wolf Blitzer of CNN [asked](#) about a hypothetical 30-year-old man without insurance who needed six months of medical care. Knowing Rep. Paul's opposition to government healthcare, Blitzer asked: "But congressman, are you saying that Society should just let him die?"

Dr. Paul [replied](#):

No. I practiced medicine before we had Medicaid in the early 1960s when I got out of medical school. I practiced at Santa Rosa hospital in San Antonio. And the churches took care of them. We never turned anybody away from the hospital. And we've given up on this whole concept that we might take care of ourselves, assume responsibility for ourselves. Our neighbors, our friends, our churches would do it. That's the reason the cost is so high. The cost is so high because we dump it on the government, it becomes a bureaucracy. It becomes a special interest, it cow-tows to the insurance companies and then the drug companies.

After the debate, few knew what Rep. Paul was talking about, and an even smaller fraction believed what he was talking about would ever work. Dr. Paul's medical partner, Jack Pruitt, [told this writer several years ago](#) that Ron Paul had always opposed government intervention in medical care. "When I walked into his office," Pruitt said, "the first thing he said to me was that there were two things that he and I had to agree upon or else there was no use for us to even talk. He said, 'Number one is, we do not do any abortions.... Number two is, we also don't accept any federal funds. We are going to see Medicare and Medicaid patients for free, and we are going to treat them just like we treat everybody else regardless of what it costs us to do that.'"

Pruitt [explained](#) that he was hesitant about the second condition, because he was a young doctor with lots of bills from medical school at the time. "He never sent a bill" to poor patients who would have



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on December 30, 2011

qualified for Medicare or Medicaid, Pruitt said. But he also said that despite not taking any government money, "we had a pretty busy practice, and a pretty lucrative practice."

In other words, the free market in medicine worked.

Moreover, it meant that Paul and Pruitt gave free medical care to hundreds of patients over the years, though some patients paid for their care in whatever way they could. "Some of the people would bring chickens, or they would bring vegetables from their garden if they couldn't afford to pay for their obstetrical fee," Richard Hardoin, a pediatrician who used to care for the babies Paul delivered, [told](#) National Public Radio October 25.

Paul reacted to the Williams advertisement emotionally on the [Jan Mickelson Radio Show on Des Moines' WHO-AM radio December 28](#), though he noted in his own modest way that giving free care was not that unusual for him.

Paul: I'm amazed at how they found that. If you would have asked me to go back and find somebody like that, I wouldn't know. But, to me, I don't remember it. I don't recall it because it was one of, it was just the way we practiced medicine, at least the way I practiced medicine.

Mickelson: Obviously, it was incredibly important to that guy. He stepped forward.

Paul: It was a non-event in the sense that what I thought it was the way my responsibilities were. But I never had the knowledge of how grateful he was, you know, and to me that is magnificent.

Mickelson: After all this time, isn't it?

Paul: Yeah, because it's been a long time....

Mickelson: I can see that had kind of an emotional effect on you.

Paul: Yeah, it did, because it's sort of something out of the past.

Mickelson: You're not given to Oprah moments. You almost had one, didn't you?

Paul: Well, it was sort of touching.

While being appreciative of Williams' gratitude, Paul's matter-of-fact statement about the "non-event" quietly highlighted as routine Ron Paul's free medical care to hundreds of patients throughout his medical career. Ron Paul supporters are famous for saying that their candidate is far too modest. Dr. Tom Woods, a RevolutionPAC board member, [notes](#) that this is also true about his economic predictions. "Dr. Paul, who is often too humble even to say 'I,' rarely points out in such a setting that he, alone among the candidates on stage, had been so prophetic about all this." Dr. Paul [predicted](#) the housing and financial crisis of 2007-08 with astonishing accuracy years earlier.

But Dr. Paul's modesty about his medical charity, and how he practiced what he preaches, was also true with respect to his medical practice.

Photo of Ron Paul: AP Images



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