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JSPH Faculty Discusses Health Care in Italy

Vittorio Maio, PharmD, MSPH, associate professor at the Jefferson School of Population Health, was a guest on Kathleen Dunn's radio program on Wisconsin Public Radio on October 22, 2009. Maio, a native of Italy, was interviewed over the phone by Dunn for a live broadcast about the health care system in Italy. A report by the World Health Organization ranked Italy second in the world in health care system performance, while the United States is ranked 37th.

During the hour-long program, Maio discussed the evolution of the Italian health care system, its differences from American health care, his personal experiences with health care in Italy, and how the Italian system is funded. Maio also fielded questions from listeners.

"In Italy the concept of solidarity, the concept of sharing wealth, the concept of having general benefits coming from the development of society, is embedded in our culture," Maio, who joined the Jefferson Medical College faculty in 2004, explained. "That was what the Fathers wanted to emphasize in the Constitution."

Explaining that Italy is a very young democracy in relation to the US, Maio noted that the developers of the Italian Constitution chose to make universal health care one of the document's components, choosing a social insurance model similar to those in Germany, France and Switzerland.

Health care coverage for the whole population is a key characteristic of the Italian health care system. Mandatory health insurance was established in 1943. This system was replaced in 1978 by the institution of the Italian National Health Service (NHS). Similar to the British model, the Italian NHS provides single payer universal health care coverage throughout the Italian State.

In Italy, Maio explained, "health is a value for the country. I never thought not to have health care coverage in all my life in Italy. It's embedded in our culture, so the government will protect us toward any type of illness or any type of problem related to health." ■

To listen to this broadcast visit:
http://www.wpr.org/regions/mke/healthcare.cfm.