

This disillusioned doctor quit his practice. Now he works to reform Alaska's overpriced health system.

Author: Charles Wohlforth | Opinion in the Anchorage Daily News, December 3, 2017

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The doctor who is leading Alaska health care reform said he quit his orthopedic clinic because he was no longer comfortable being part of a system so expensive it is crippling the economy.

Alan Gross knows how much Alaska specialists make in private practice because he was one of them. But he's the first I've found willing to divulge the astronomical compensation these doctors receive and how they do it.

As I've written in past columns, health care is more expensive in Alaska than in other states, and the cost has rising faster here. But our health outcomes are average.

[\[Series of columns explores Alaska's extreme health care costs\]](#)

Knowing the system as he does, Gross says the reason is simple – much simpler than suggested by complex reports, plans and conferences, or admitted by those riding the gravy train.

“I think the fact prices are extraordinarily high in Alaska, allowing hospitals and medical providers to make very high profits in the delivery of care, is the one and only reason as to why the health care costs to consumers, in the form of premiums, are so high,” Gross said.

When Gross left his practice in Juneau in 2013, he went back to school to study health care economics, earning a master's of public health at University of California, Los Angeles. Now he's back in Alaska and leading a pair of citizen initiatives to protect consumers and low-income patients

He is thoroughly Alaskan. Gross's father was a legendary Alaska attorney general in the state's formative years. He is also a commercial fisherman.