



September 15, 2009 - Topic: Health Care Reform

Poll Finds Majority of Physicians Back Public Option in Health Reform

A large majority of U.S. physicians support a government-run public plan option, according to a **poll** published on Monday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, NPR's "**Morning Edition**" reports.

Salomeh Keyhani and Alex Federman, both internists and researchers at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, conducted the poll, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The poll was conducted from June through September by mail and by phone and included 2,130 doctors.

Keyhani said that "nearly three-quarters of physicians supported some form of a public option, either alone or in combination with private insurance options." According to the poll, 63% of physicians said they favor giving patients the option of a public plan in addition to private insurance options, while 10% said they favor the public plan only -- adding up to 73% in total support for a public option.

According to the researchers, they found strong support for the public option among all categories of physicians.

The poll also found support among physicians who are members of the American Medical Association, a group that in the past has opposed the public option.

Both the authors belong to the National Physicians Alliance, which supports a public option.

In addition, the poll indicated that compared with patients, doctors support a public option in greater numbers. Keyhani said that doctors already have experience with government-run health care in the form of Medicare, and overall they like it (Shapiro, "Morning Edition," NPR, 9/15).

AMA Turnaround

AMA recently began lobbying and advertising to win public support for Democratic reform plans in Congress many of which it has opposed for nearly 60 years.

The turnaround resulted from a deal with lawmakers to stop planned cuts in Medicare payments, which would be worth \$228 billion to physicians over 10 years. In addition, the deal requires that a proposal requiring all U.S. residents to obtain medical insurance include premium subsidies to ensure that doctor bills are paid.

Health analyst Robert Laszewski said the group has received a sweetheart deal mostly for their reversal on reform efforts. He said, "They were bought off. And the price tag was \$228 billion."

However, AMA officials said their change in stance reflects changes in the health care system and the way doctors feel about it (Geiger/Hamburger, *Los Angeles Times*, 9/15).

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