

From Sausage Making to Mud Wrestling

The results are in. Thank you to the 96 of you who took the time to fill out the survey on health care reform. While not statistically valid it is helpful to get some idea of the thoughts and perspective of the membership. One of the challenges that any broad based organization has, is to adequately represent its membership. However, as the survey results indicate not all physicians are of the same opinion about most things, even something as central to our profession as health care reform. Physicians have a wide range of political, social and economic views that influence their approach to this complex issue. I believe most physician organizations are struggling with representing their membership that might have diametrically opposed views on this very topic. With some limited research of physician organizations it is evident there are some competing interests when addressing health care reform. At the end of this article are references for several of the larger physician organizations and their policies on health care reform. (*These can be viewed at <http://www.mcmsonline.com/index/news/advocacy> in pdf format*).

Most respondents to our survey agreed that there is a need for health care reform with 72% either agreeing or strongly agreeing. 54% of the respondents felt that the escalating cost of health care is the major issue for the population while 28% felt that uninsured Americans was the biggest issue. Generally the majority felt that everyone should have access to care, the government and the medical community should work to set healthcare options together, and that there should be incentives for primary care. Of the options for how to accomplish reform, the only option that had majority positive response was that insurance companies should have strict rules about denial of coverage/care/level of fees. The majority were not in favor of expanded Medicare or Medicaid system. Most felt elimination of pre-existing conditions for eligibility was appropriate. I encourage all to look at the results and the comments that were sent in.

As this process moves forward (using that term loosely) one thing is certain. Change or the threat of change creates anxiety. I see it in my patients and my colleagues. Health care reform has morphed from sausage making in congress to mud wrestling at the "Town Hall Meetings". There is very little trust that what will come out of this will be good, and even more fear about how it might affect everyone. The more fear there is the more emotionally charged the discussions become. Unfortunately, we witness daily the exaggerated claims and outright mistruths about what is being proposed. I am disturbed that for many these sources of misinformation become the basis on which people make their decisions. Certainly people on both ends of the political spectrum will listen to the sources that support their initial point of view. Many times it is difficult to get objective non-partisan viewpoints. I have found *www.politifact.com* and *www.factcheck.org* to be useful and informative.

I would like to see more surveys of our membership on topics other than health care reform. I believe the more the leadership knows about your perspectives, the better we can move forward to be supportive and to identify areas for improvement. I also think it helpful for the membership to see these results. Perhaps it can stimulate more participation by our members.

As always welcome your comments at briveland@mcmsonline.com

Until next month,

Brian R. Riveland, MD

President

“Get your facts first, then you can distort them how you please.” Mark Twain , quoted in the *Des Moines Register*.

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