



HARVARD  
School of Public Health

**Topline**

**NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health**

# **The Public and the Health Care Delivery System**

**April 2009**

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## Methodology

The NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard School of Public Health survey, *The Public and the Health Care Delivery System*, is part of a series of projects about health-related issues by NPR (National Public Radio), the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and the Harvard School of Public Health. Representatives of the three organizations worked together to develop the survey questionnaire and to analyze the results, with NPR maintaining sole editorial control over its broadcasts relating to the survey results. The survey research team included Mollyann Brodie, Ph.D., Liz Hamel, Claudia Deane and Carolina Gutiérrez from the Kaiser Family Foundation; Professor Robert Blendon, Sc.D., and John Benson, M.A. of the Harvard School of Public Health; and Anne Gudenkauf, Joe Neel, Julie Rovner, Joanne Silberner, Richard Knox, Joseph Shapiro and April Fulton from NPR.

Fieldwork was done by telephone March 12 – March 22, 2009 among a nationally representative sample of 1,238 randomly selected respondents ages 18 and over by Social Science Research Solutions. All groups have been weighted to reflect their actual distribution in the nation. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 3.5 percentage points. For results based on smaller subsets of respondents the margin of sampling error is somewhat higher.

Please note: (1) Table percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. (2) Values less than 0.5% are indicated by an asterisk (\*). (3) "Vol." indicates that a response was volunteered by the respondent and not an explicitly offered choice. (4) Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

1. Do you have a regular place you go to when you are sick or want medical advice, or not?

<b>84</b>	Yes
<b>16</b>	No
*	Don't know
*	Refused

2. At what type of health care place do you usually receive your medical care? Is it a doctor's office, a clinic or health center, a hospital emergency room, a VA clinic, or some other place?

<b>64</b>	Doctor's office
<b>21</b>	Clinic or health center
<b>9</b>	Hospital emergency room
<b>2</b>	VA clinic
<b>1</b>	Hospital (unspecified emergency, outpatient, etc.)
<b>1</b>	Some other place
<b>1</b>	None/no where
<b>1</b>	Don't know
*	Refused

3. How many different doctors and other health professionals have you seen in the past two years?

<b>7</b>	None
<b>23</b>	1
<b>41</b>	2-3
<b>17</b>	4-5
<b>11</b>	6 or more
<b>1</b>	Don't know
--	Refused

4. In general, do you think that coordination among all of the different health professionals that you see is a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem at all?

<b>17</b>	Major problem
<b>27</b>	Minor problem
<b>52</b>	Not a problem at all
<b>3</b>	Don't know
*	Refused

5. When you visit your doctor, does he or she usually enter your health information into a computer while you are present, or not?

<b>46</b>	Yes
<b>50</b>	No
<b>4</b>	Don't know
*	Refused

6. Have you ever been able to access any of your medical test results online, or not?

<b>9</b>	Yes
<b>71</b>	No
<b>1</b>	(Vol.) Never had any medical tests
<b>19</b>	(Vol.) Never tried to access
<b>*</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

7. How important do you think it is for the health care providers you see to use electronic or computer-based medical records instead of using paper-based records? Do you think it is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

<b>42</b>	Very important
<b>33</b>	Somewhat important
<b>12</b>	Not too important
<b>10</b>	Not at all important
<b>3</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

8. If your medical records and personal health information were to be stored electronically and could be shared online, how confident are you that those records and information would remain confidential? Are you very confident, somewhat confident, not too confident, or not at all confident?

<b>11</b>	Very confident
<b>30</b>	Somewhat confident
<b>25</b>	Not too confident
<b>34</b>	Not at all confident
<b>1</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

9. If the U.S. adopted a system where medical records were kept electronically and could be shared online, do you think the overall cost of health care in the country would go up, go down, or stay about the same?

Based on one half of total respondents (N=619)

<b>34</b>	Go up
<b>22</b>	Go down
<b>36</b>	Stay about the same
<b>7</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

9. If the U.S. adopted a system where medical records were kept electronically and could be shared online, do you think the overall cost of health care in the country would go up, go down, or stay about the same?
- 9a. Do you think the cost of health care would go (up/down) a lot, or just a little?

9/9a. Combo Table based on total respondents

<b>34</b>	Overall cost of health care in this country would go up
<b>22</b>	Go up a lot
<b>11</b>	Go up a little
<b>22</b>	Overall cost of health care in this country would go down
<b>6</b>	Go down a lot
<b>16</b>	Go down a little
<b>36</b>	Overall cost of health care in this country would stay about the same
<b>7</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

10. If the U.S. adopted a system where medical records were kept electronically and could be shared online, do you think the overall cost of your family's health care would go up, go down, or stay about the same?

Based on one half of total respondents (N=619)

<b>39</b>	Go up
<b>12</b>	Go down
<b>43</b>	Stay about the same
<b>7</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

10. If the U.S. adopted a system where medical records were kept electronically and could be shared online, do you think the overall cost of your family's health care would go up, go down, or stay about the same?
- 10a. Do you think your family's health care costs would go (up/down) a lot, or just a little?

10/10a. Combo Table based on total respondents

<b>39</b>	Overall cost of family's health care would go up
<b>22</b>	Go up a lot
<b>16</b>	Go up a little
<b>12</b>	Overall cost of family's health care would go down
<b>4</b>	Go down a lot
<b>7</b>	Go down a little
<b>43</b>	Overall cost of family's health care would stay about the same
<b>7</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

11. If the U.S. adopted a system where medical records were kept electronically and could be shared online, how likely do you think it is that (INSERT ITEM)? Very likely, somewhat likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?

Items e and h based on one half of total respondents (N=620)

Items f and i based on one half of total respondents (N=618)

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not too likely	Not at all likely	Don't know	Refused
e. The overall quality of medical care in the country would be improved	<b>23</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	--
f. The quality of care that you and your family receive would be improved	<b>21</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	*
g. An unauthorized person would get access to your medical records	<b>41</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	--
h. Fewer people would get unnecessary medical care	<b>21</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	*
i. Fewer people would get sick or die as a result of medical errors	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
j. Your own doctors would do a better job coordinating your care	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	*

12. Do you think each of the following is a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem with the U.S. health care system? What about (INSERT)?

	Major problem	Minor problem	Not a problem	Don't know	Refused
a. Too many patients getting medical tests and treatments that they don't really need	<b>49</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	*
b. Too many patients NOT getting the medical tests and treatments they need	<b>67</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	*

13. When doctors make decisions between different treatment options for a patient, do you think there is usually CLEAR scientific evidence about which treatment is likely to work best, or do you think the scientific evidence is not always clear about which will work best?

**23** Usually clear scientific evidence  
**72** Scientific evidence is not always clear  
**5** Don't know  
**\*** Refused

14. If an expensive medical treatment has not been proven to be more effective than other, less expensive treatments, do you think insurance companies should have to pay for it, or not?

Based on one half of total respondents (N=619)

**56** Insurance companies should have to pay for it  
**35** Insurance companies should not have to pay for it  
**6** (Vol.) Depends  
**2** Don't know  
**\*** Refused

15. If your doctor recommends an expensive medical treatment, but it has not been proven to be more effective than other, less expensive treatments, do you think your insurance company should have to pay for it, or not?

Based on one half of total respondents (N=619)

**55** Insurance companies should have to pay for it  
**38** Insurance companies should not have to pay for it  
**4** (Vol.) Depends  
**3** Don't know  
**\*** Refused

16. There has been some discussion about having an outside group make recommendations on which tests and treatments should be paid for by insurance. How much would you trust (INSERT ITEM) to make these recommendations?

Item a based on one half of total respondents (N=619)

Item b based on one half of total respondents (N=619)

	A great deal	A fair amount	Just a little	Not at all	Don't know	Refused
a. A panel of experts from an independent scientific organization	<b>11</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>*</b>
b. A panel of experts appointed by the federal government, from an independent scientific organization	<b>10</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>*</b>
e. The National Institutes of Health or another government health agency	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>--</b>

17. Here are two different ways insurance companies could pay doctors. Which of these do you think would be better? (Your doctor gets paid a fee each time they see you) OR (Your doctor gets paid a yearly amount for your care, regardless of how much care you receive)?

<b>70</b>	Your doctor gets paid a fee each time they see you
<b>25</b>	Your doctor gets paid a yearly amount for your care
<b>1</b>	(Vol.) Doesn't matter/Wouldn't be much difference
<b>3</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

Now thinking again about your own health care experiences...

18. In the past year, have you had difficulty getting an appointment with a doctor when you needed a checkup or routine medical care, or not?

<b>16</b>	Yes
<b>83</b>	No
<b>*</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

- 18a. Was this a serious problem for you, or not?

Based on total who had difficulty getting an appointment with a doctor (N=183)

<b>56</b>	Yes, serious problem
<b>43</b>	No, not a serious problem
<b>1</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

18. In the past year, have you had difficulty getting an appointment with a doctor when you needed a checkup or routine medical care, or not?

- 18a. Was this a serious problem for you, or not?

18/18a. Combo Table based on total

<b>16</b>	Had difficulty getting an appointment with a doctor
<b>9</b>	Serious problem
<b>7</b>	Not a serious problem
<b>83</b>	Did not have difficulty getting an appointment with a doctor
<b>*</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

19. In the past year, have you had difficulty getting an appointment with a doctor with a certain specialty, such as a cardiologist, orthopedist, or surgeon, or not?

<b>14</b>	Yes
<b>85</b>	No
<b>1</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

19a. Was this a serious problem for you, or not?

Based on total who had difficulty getting an appointment with a specialist (N=146)

<b>63</b>	Yes, serious problem
<b>35</b>	No, not a serious problem
<b>2</b>	Don't know
<b>--</b>	Refused

19. In the past year, have you had difficulty getting an appointment with a doctor with a certain specialty, such as a cardiologist, orthopedist, or surgeon, or not?

19a. Was this a serious problem for you, or not?

19/19a. Combo Table based on total

<b>14</b>	Had difficulty getting an appointment with a specialist
<b>9</b>	Serious problem
<b>5</b>	Not a serious problem
<b>85</b>	Did not have difficulty getting an appointment with a specialist
<b>1</b>	Don't know
<b>*</b>	Refused

20. How often does your doctor discuss with you his or her REASONS for recommending a particular treatment? Often, sometimes, rarely, or never?

<b>60</b>	Often
<b>19</b>	Sometimes
<b>11</b>	Rarely
<b>8</b>	Never
<b>2</b>	Don't know
<b>1</b>	Refused

21. Has your doctor ever talked with you about (INSERT) as a reason for his or her recommendations, or not?

Based on total whose doctor has discussed his or her reasons for recommending a particular treatment (N=1122)

	Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
a. His or her own experience using the same treatment for other patients	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>--</b>
b. Scientific research about how well the treatment works	<b>54</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>--</b>
c. The cost of the treatment	<b>32</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>--</b>
d. How well a treatment works compared to other less expensive treatments	<b>51</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>--</b>

20. How often does your doctor discuss with you his or her REASONS for recommending a particular treatment? Often, sometimes, rarely, or never?
21. Has your doctor ever talked with you about (INSERT) as a reason for his or her recommendations, or not?

20/21. Combo Table based on total

<b>90</b>	Doctor discusses reasons for recommending a particular treatment (NET)
<b>44</b>	His/her own experience using the same treatment for other patients
<b>48</b>	Scientific research about how well the treatment works
<b>29</b>	The cost of the treatment
<b>46</b>	How well a treatment works compared to other less expensive treatments
<b>8</b>	Doctor never discusses reasons for recommending a particular treatment
<b>2</b>	Don't know
<b>1</b>	Refused

22. Do you think your doctor's charges are reasonable or unreasonable?

<b>65</b>	Charges are reasonable
<b>27</b>	Charges are unreasonable
*	(Vol.) Don't have a doctor
<b>4</b>	(Vol.) Don't know how much my doctor charges
<b>4</b>	Don't know
*	Refused

23. Do you think your doctor tries to keep the cost of health care down for you, or not?

<b>63</b>	Doctor tries to keep cost of health care down
<b>29</b>	Doctor does not try to keep costs of health care down
<b>1</b>	(Vol.) Don't have a doctor
<b>7</b>	Don't know
*	Refused

24. When your doctor orders medical or lab tests, do you think he or she knows how much is charged for the tests, or not?

<b>51</b>	Doctor knows how much is charged for tests
<b>37</b>	Doctor does not know how much is charged for tests
<b>1</b>	(Vol.) Don't have a doctor
<b>12</b>	Don't know
*	Refused

25. In the past two years, have you ever asked your doctor what would be charged for a medical or lab test, or not?

<b>22</b>	Yes, asked doctor what would be charged for a medical lab test
<b>78</b>	No, did not ask doctor what would be charged for a medical lab test
*	(Vol.) Don't have a doctor
*	Don't know
--	Refused

26. In the past two years, do you think you have received a medical test or treatment that was probably NOT necessary, or hasn't this happened?

<b>16</b>	Yes, have received test or treatment that was probably not necessary
<b>82</b>	No, this hasn't happened
<b>2</b>	Don't know
--	Refused



























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