

# HEALTH NEWS COVERAGE IN THE U.S. MEDIA

January 2007 – June 2008

A REPORT BY

The Kaiser Family Foundation

AND

The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism

DECEMBER 2008



PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

**The Kaiser Family Foundation** is a non-profit private operating foundation, based in Menlo Park, California, dedicated to producing and communicating the best possible information, research and analysis on health issues.

**The Project for Excellence in Journalism** is an initiative of the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C. and is dedicated to studying the performance of the press, specializing in part in content analysis. The Project is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction
2	Key Findings
8	Conclusion
9	Methodology



## INTRODUCTION

Even as the news media environment in this country changes rapidly, it continues to hold a critically important role in society: millions of Americans turn to various news media every day for information, and what they learn there makes a difference in which issues rise or fall on the national agenda, how the public perceives key issues, and how well they understand important policy debates.

The purpose of this study is to take a broad look at how the news media covered one vital area—health and health policy—in 2007 and 2008. While there have been many studies that have taken a narrow look at news coverage of specific health issues (breast cancer, diabetes) or at coverage in one particular news medium (local television, print) this report takes a wider look at the broad spectrum of health issues, across a wide range of news media.

The report addresses the following questions:

- To what extent has health news been a part of the national news agenda?
- Which health topics get the most coverage?
- How does coverage vary from print to television, radio to online?
- And how big of an issue was health in coverage of the 2008 Presidential primary campaign?

The findings are based on an analysis of coverage of health in 48 different news outlets sampled as part of the ongoing News Coverage Index produced by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ). This report covers an 18-month time period, from January 2007 through June 2008. The study includes small, medium and large market newspapers, network TV morning and evening news programs, cable television news, news and talk radio, and online news. A total of 3,513 health stories were analyzed for this report. Two limitations of the sample are that it does not include local television news, and that its newspaper data includes front-page stories only. At the same time, a major advantage of this study is that it analyzed news coverage every weekday (plus the Sunday newspapers) for a year and a half, rather than relying on a sample from a more limited time frame (e.g., one week's worth of content).

The key findings include:

- Health news was the 8th biggest subject in the national news, comprising 3.6% of all coverage. This is more than three times the amount of coverage for education or transportation, but much less than coverage about foreign affairs, crime, or natural disasters.
- Network evening news viewers were the most likely to find health news in their programming. Looking at every newscast (Monday - Friday) on the three evening news programs from January 2007 through June 2008 reveals that fully 8.3% of airtime was devoted to health-related news, with a heavy emphasis on specific ailments such as heart disease and cancer. This was more than twice the coverage of health in any other news genre except newspapers (where it was 5.9%).
- Cable news, on the other hand, found very little room for health news, just 1.4% of programming studied.
- When the overall coverage of health was broken down, specific diseases such as cancer, diabetes or heart disease received the most coverage at 41.7%. Public health issues such as food contamination, tainted vaccines, and binge drinking garnered the next most attention, accounting for nearly a third (30.9%) of all health coverage. News about health policy or the U.S. health care system was not far behind, at 27.4% of the coverage.
- The single disease to get the most attention was cancer, accounting for 10.1% of all health coverage. Some of this attention was driven by announcements of cancer in two public figures—Elizabeth Edwards and Tony Snow. The number two condition was diabetes/obesity, at 5.2% of coverage, followed by heart disease, at 3.9%, and HIV/AIDS and autism at 2.2% each.
- The biggest individual health-related story was the debate over U.S. health care policies, which was the focus of 16.3% of all health news. Coverage of that story peaked in the fall of 2007 when the debate about the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) erupted in Congress. The next biggest story was the tuberculosis-carrying traveler who entered the U.S. This story accounted for 8.3% of health coverage for the entire 18-month period, but during the week it occurred, it was the top-ranked story in the nation.
- Despite ongoing debates in government about the future of our health care system, health did not become a dominant part of the 2008 primary campaign coverage. Whether focused on health policy or personal health issues, the subject accounted for less than 1% (.6%) of the campaign-related news in the study. It is important to note that this includes only those stories in which the campaign was the primary topic, and health was a major focus of the story; and that the study included only those print stories that appeared on the front page of the paper. For these reasons, it is possible that the study underestimates coverage of health in the campaign. On the other hand, it does seem to indicate a smaller amount of high-profile coverage of the candidates' positions on health care than many insiders expected.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Overall Coverage of Health in the News

U.S.-related health news accounted for 3.6% of national news coverage in 2007 and the first six months of 2008.<sup>1</sup> This is more than three times the coverage of education (.9%) or transportation (1%), and makes health the 8th most prominent topic in the news overall.

Health coverage falls far behind coverage of political campaigns, foreign affairs, crime, and disasters such as hurricanes. But it comes in ahead of what some would call less serious categories such as lifestyle stories, celebrities and entertainment, and sports news.

#### TOP ISSUES IN U.S. NEWS MEDIA

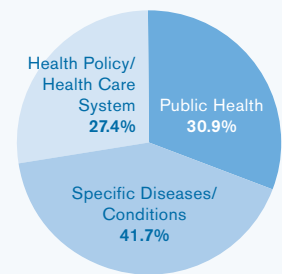
(January 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008)

Topic	Percent of News Hole
Campaigns/Elections/Politics	21.3
U.S. Foreign Affairs	13.6
Foreign	11.0
Crime	6.6
Government Agencies/Legislatures	5.3
Economy/Economics	5.0
Disasters/Accidents	4.2
Health	3.6
Business	3.1
Lifestyle	3.0
Miscellaneous	2.5
Domestic Affairs (other)	2.3
Media	2.3
Defense/Military (domestic)	2.3
Immigration	2.2
Sports	1.7
Environment	1.7
Domestic Terrorism	1.6
Celebrity/Entertainment	1.5
Science/Technology	1.2
Race/Gender/Gay Issues	1.1
Transportation	1.0
Education	.9
Religion	.8
Court/Legal System	.4
Development/Sprawl	.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Top Health News Topic Areas

Among all news stories on health, the largest proportion focused on issues concerning the effects of, treatment for, or research about specific diseases or conditions (41.7% of all coverage). Potential epidemics and other public health issues (such as contamination of food, drugs or water, vaccine problems, nutrition, or trends like binge eating or drinking) accounted for just under a third (30.9%) of all health coverage. This was closely followed by stories about health policy or the well-being of the U.S. health care system itself (27.4%), including topics such as the uninsured, prescription drug care, health care costs, and programs such as Medicare or Medicaid. This means that news about health policy and the health care system received less than 1% (.9%) of total news coverage during the period of the study.

#### HEALTH NEWS TOPIC AREAS



Cancer received the most attention of any specific disease, accounting for 10.1% of total health coverage. The highest spike in reporting on this disease occurred in March of 2007, when news broke of the recurrence of cancer in two public figures—Elizabeth Edwards, the spouse of then-presidential candidate John Edwards, and then-White House Press Secretary Tony Snow.

Diabetes and obesity together, considered by many health professionals to be an emerging epidemic, came next, garnering half as much coverage (5.2%) as cancer. Heart disease followed, making up another 3.9%.

### Coverage of Health by Media Sector

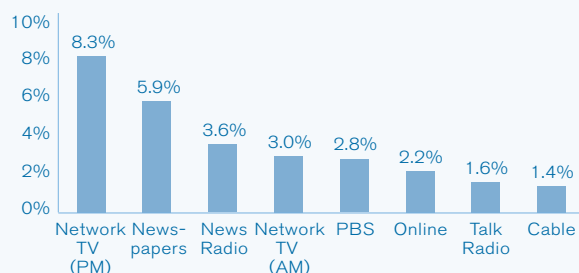
The different media sectors studied for this report varied widely in both the amount and the nature of coverage dedicated to U.S. health news.

Network evening news was the most committed to the topic. With an older audience than other media, the evening news also focused more on specific diseases and ailments. Newspapers devoted the second most attention to health news (5.9%), but they spent most of their reporting on stories about health policy or the U.S. health care system. And, in the cable primetime and daytime programming studied here,

<sup>1</sup> Foreign health news coverage accounted for .2% of the news hole (129 stories) from January 2007 through June 2008. These stories from abroad are not a part of this report. News hole refers to the total space or time given to content.

health accounted for just 1.4% of airtime, mostly through reports on public health outbreaks such as salmonella-tainted tomatoes, stories that fit the definition of breaking news.

#### PERCENT OF NEWS DEVOTED TO HEALTH, BY MEDIA SECTOR



#### Network Evening News

The three network evening news programs—the genre with the oldest audience—devoted by far the greatest percent of their programming to health. Fully 8.3% of all coverage dealt with health issues, more than twice that of any news sector except newspapers (which were 5.9%).

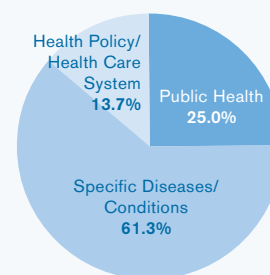
Another notable distinction of the nightly newscasts on the traditional broadcast channels is that they dedicated more of their health coverage to specific diseases and conditions than any other media sector studied, 61.3% of all their health coverage. This included a CBS series in early 2007 on new treatments and services available to stroke victims, and an

ABC series called “Echoes of Autism,” with more follow-up pieces in 2008, including a feature on a young autistic girl working with a computer specially equipped with pictures and symbols to respond to viewers’ questions.

Cancer, as it did overall, received the most attention of any specific disease or condition on network news, at 18.7%. During the 18 months studied, the network evening news programs taken together aired an average of about 10 stories on cancer every month. And in 17 of the 18 months (with August as the only exception), each of the three networks carried at least one cancer story each month. This was followed by 7.1%

of health coverage that was about diabetes or obesity, and 6.7% on heart disease. After the sudden death of long-time NBC host and correspondent Tim Russert, *NBC Nightly News* also aired a special segment on sudden heart attacks. Autism, a disease that likely generated far less coverage a few years earlier, came next (4.4%), ahead of Alzheimer’s (1.4%), HIV/AIDS (.4%), and ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease, .2%).

#### HEALTH NEWS COVERAGE IN NETWORK EVENING NEWS



#### PERCENT OF HEALTH NEWS TOPICS BY MEDIA SECTOR

TOPIC	MEDIA SECTOR										
	Overall	Newspapers	Online	Cable	PBS	Network TV			Radio		
						Overall	AM	PM	Overall	News	Talk
Health Policy/Health Care System	27.4%	40.5%	17.9%	25.8%	42.3%	16.5%	10.5%	13.7%	28.8%	24.5%	35.2%
Public Health	30.9	21.3	37.6	42.8	18.4	25.9	33.0	25.0	26.2	27.4	24.3
Total Diseases/Conditions	41.8	38.2	44.6	31.5	39.4	57.6	56.7	61.3	44.9	48.2	40.5
Cancer	10.1	7.0	12.1	7.0	8.1	17.3	18.1	18.7	10.6	10.1	11.4
Diabetes/Obesity	5.2	4.7	6.4	3.1	5.5	7.0	7.7	7.1	6.6	3.8	10.8
Heart Disease	3.9	4.8	3.1	1.4	5.9	7.0	8.8	6.7	3.5	4.6	1.9
HIV/AIDS	2.2	3.5	6.0	.1	2.7	.9	1.3	.4	.6	1.1	–
Autism	2.2	1.6	1.9	2.4	.1	3.4	2.1	4.4	1.7	2.6	.5
Mental Health	1.6	2.4	.6	.9	3.6	1.9	1.2	1.8	2.5	4.1	.2
Alzheimer’s	0.6	1.0	–	.4	.3	1.1	.6	1.4	.5	.7	.3
ALS	<0.1	–	–	–	–	.1	–	.2	–	–	–
Other Diseases	15.9	13.2	14.5	16.2	13.2	18.9	16.9	20.6	18.9	21.2	15.4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

One quarter (25%) of health coverage on the network evening newscasts focused on a public health story such as tainted vaccines. Another 13.7% centered on health policy or an examination of the health care system. For example, in December 2007 ABC's *World News Tonight* did a three-part series on health reform called "Critical Condition: Rx for America." The stories were each three to four minutes long and covered topics such as universal health care, the health policy proposals of the presidential candidates, and how health care is delivered through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Most health stories on the network evening news were not at the top of the broadcast. Just 7% of health stories led the newscast; more than 8 in 10 stories appeared fourth or lower in the program.

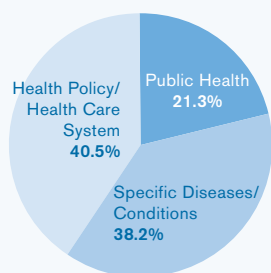
**Newspapers**

Newspapers were the genre that dedicated the second-largest amount of space to health news, devoting 5.9% of front page space to coverage of health issues. And substantially more of that coverage than in most other media was about health policy or the U.S. health care system—fully 40.5% of all front-page health coverage was on this topic. These stories focused on a wide range of actors and issues involving hospitals, physicians, employers, insurers, consumers, states, and the federal government. The stories tended to paint a

picture of a system in trouble: states sometimes at odds with the federal government, and searching for independent solutions; employers seeking to cut costs; consumers—both insured and uninsured—

struggling to pay soaring medical costs; and insurers trying to pare their rolls. Newspapers were one of the only outlets to devote more coverage to health policy and the health care system than to specific diseases (40.5% vs. 38.2%).

HEALTH NEWS COVERAGE IN NEWSPAPERS



Public health outbreaks, again contrary to other media studied, received about half as much coverage as did the health system (21.3%). And one specific illness that received more attention on the front pages of newspapers than in most other outlets was HIV/AIDS, which accounted for 3.5% of newspapers' health coverage versus 2.2% in the media overall.

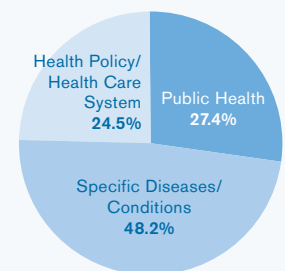
**News Radio**

The news radio programs in the study devoted 3.6% of news time to health issues, with 48.2% of health coverage focused on specific diseases, and the remainder split between coverage of public health (27.4%) and health policy and the health care system (24.5%).

One area where news radio stood out—along with the PBS show *NewsHour*—was in coverage of mental health issues.<sup>2</sup>

These stories accounted for 4.1% of news radio's health news coverage, more than twice that of the media overall (1.6%). A majority of these stories were about anti-depressant drugs—their efficacy as treatment, a link to a rise in suicides, and negative side effects.

HEALTH NEWS COVERAGE IN NEWS RADIO



**Network Morning News**

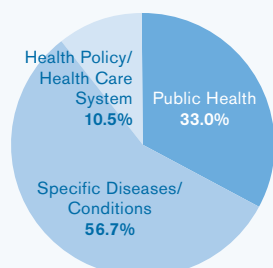
One interesting distinction in network television is the difference between morning and evening news. The first half-hour of the morning news shows dedicated only about a third as much (3%) of their time to health as did their counterpart half-hour news programs that appeared in the evening. (Pew's News Coverage Index studies the first half-hour of these programs because that is generally the half hour most dedicated to news. It is possible that these programs air more health coverage in the later stages of their two- or three-hour programs.)

<sup>2</sup> Mental health conditions and Alzheimer's were added to the coding scheme in June 2007. Prior to that, stories about those illnesses were included in the specific diseases/conditions category.



But, though they may be fewer in number, the focus of health stories in the more news-oriented first half-hour of the morning shows is strikingly similar to the evening news.

#### HEALTH NEWS COVERAGE IN NETWORK MORNING NEWS



Morning news spent the smallest proportion of health coverage of any genre on the debate over health policy and the health care system itself (10.5%), and instead spent more time on public health

(33%), and on specific diseases or conditions (56.7%), such as cancer (18.1%) and heart disease (8.8%).

Looking even more closely at this morning coverage suggests that the three networks were somewhat different from one another in approach. ABC's *Good Morning America* devoted 4.3% of its time to health issues, nearly twice that of NBC's *Today* program and CBS's *Early Show*—both of which dedicated 2.3% of their overall news hole to health. And health stories on both ABC and CBS averaged over 1.5 minutes, considerably longer than the average story on NBC, which ran just over one minute.

There were notable differences in story emphasis among the three morning network news programs as well. ABC's health coverage on *Good Morning America*—comprised of 167 stories—focused most heavily on societal-level, public health news such as FDA rulings, new drug approvals and proposed regulations. In contrast, among the 86 health stories aired by CBS's *Early Show* were a number of pieces based on interviews focusing more on the political angle. Their coverage of the SCHIP story, for instance, included interviews with Delaware Senator Joe Biden, Georgia Congressman Tom Price and Illinois Congressman Rahm Emanuel. The emphasis of the 143 health stories appearing on NBC's *Today* program fell in the middle. There were numerous reports on recent health findings, coupled with a handful of longer interviews such as one with the physician treating Andrew Speaker, who raised alarms by entering the U.S. carrying the TB virus.

#### PBS

In all, *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer* devoted 2.8% of its programming to health coverage—only about a third as much as the commercial evening programs. (In order to have a comparable sample to the commercial newscasts, Pew monitors only 30 minutes of the PBS show each day. It is possible that the other half-hour of the show included more health coverage—the program has a health desk and is known to cover health policy issues fairly frequently.)

The health news covered by the show was highly concentrated on health policy and the U.S. health care system—42.3% of its health coverage, more than triple the proportion of coverage of this topic by the network evening news programs (13.7%) and even more than front pages of newspapers (40.5%). Just under 40% of *The NewsHour's* health coverage (39.4%) focused on specific diseases, ranging from Human Papilloma Virus to osteoporosis. Public health issues such as Katrina's toxic trailers, the TB traveler story, sleep aids, and cold medications accounted for 18.4% of all health coverage. It is certainly possible that the mix of health-related stories in the other half-hour on PBS would look quite different.

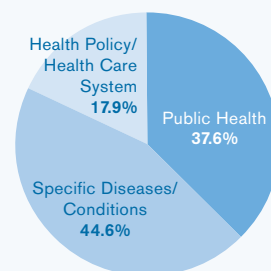
With regard to the placement of health news, *The NewsHour* tended to air its stories lower down in the newscast. Almost 91.3% were the fourth story or later, a higher percentage than for any other sector.

#### Online

Online media devoted 2.2% of “front page” news space to health-related issues (Pew examines the top five stories on Web sites, a measure that was deemed comparable to what one might find on a newspaper front page).

Even with such little coverage, the Web stood out for its attention to one specific condition—HIV/AIDS. Fully 6% of online health coverage was dedicated to HIV/AIDS, nearly double the percentage for newspapers and three times the percent of the media overall.

#### HEALTH NEWS COVERAGE IN ONLINE NEWS



Taken together, coverage of specific diseases accounted for 44.6% of all online coverage studied. Public health issues were next at 37.6%. Online outlets addressed an extremely wide range of health concerns, including the safety of cold medications for children, nutrition, the staph superbug, vaccines, medical mistakes, teens and sex, hygiene, life expectancy, cloning, office workers at risk of blood clots, factors linked to suicides, hoof and mouth disease, e-coli, and salmonella in peanut butter, spinach and tomatoes.

**Cable News**

Cable news dedicated the smallest percentage of its news hole to health—only 1.4%—in the five hours of programming studied each weekday. Within this sparse coverage, clear tendencies of cable news still emerged. Close to half (42.8%) of the coverage focused on public health events, driven largely by two specific stories: the tuberculosis traveler, and salmonella-tainted produce. The week of the TB traveler

(May 27–June 1, 2007), cable news devoted 23.9% of its airtime to the story, twice that of the media overall and six times that of newspaper front pages (3.8%). The salmonella-tainted tomato outbreak in June of 2008 didn't

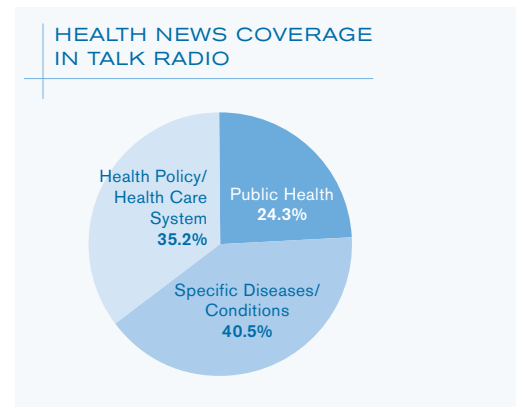
gain the same level of prominence on cable news but still amounted to 2.5% of the news hole and ranked seventh overall in cable news that week (June 9–June 15, 2008).

Just under a third of cable's health news coverage focused on specific diseases (31.5%), such as cancer (7%), diabetes or obesity (3.1%), heart disease (1.4%) mental health (.9%), Alzheimer's (.4%) and HIV/AIDS (.1%). Coverage of health policy and the health care system accounted for 25.8% of cable's health news.

**Talk Radio**

Though only 1.6% of total talk show time in this study dealt with health news, this genre stood out for its attention to the issues of diabetes and obesity.

Fully 10.8% of health care discussion on talk radio was about these two related illnesses. This was largely driven by one talk show host, Rush Limbaugh, who frequently commented on recent health reports—often as a way of challenging common thinking about obesity. In the first half-hour of his program, Limbaugh spent 2.3% of his airtime on health overall, and both his monologues and commentaries often honed in on obesity and diabetes, accounting for 18.6% of his health coverage. One such commentary spoke highly of a report that exercise need not be an essential component to weight loss. Another seconded recent data suggesting obesity is tied to stress; and a third touted a new study suggesting that being overweight may actually be good for you.



**Health-Related Events in the News**

A number of specific health-related stories emerged over the 18-month time period. The biggest one, in the end, was not a one-time event but a series of events surrounding an ongoing debate about U.S. health care policy. This story commanded 16.3% of all health news. The height of attention came in September and October 2007, when the media were focused on the SCHIP debate in Congress. Those two months, the SCHIP debate made it into the top-ten list of all coverage (10th in September and 9th in October) and accounted for about 2% of the total news hole.

The second biggest health-related story to emerge from January 2007 through June 2008 was when Andrew Speaker, a U.S. citizen who had been traveling abroad, came back into the country carrying tuberculosis. The story lasted less than three weeks in the news but still amounted to 8.3% of all health-related coverage for the entire 18-month time period. It was a story that resonated on several critical levels: triggering a global public health scare, placing the CDC at the center of a controversy, raising questions about terrorism preparedness and border security, and touching on basic issues of personal accountability and morality.

The week of Speaker's return, the story got so much attention that it was the top story in Pew's News Coverage Index, accounting for 12% of the news hole. The story's appeal cut across all sectors of the media and the tale emerged as a top-five story in all five overall media sectors. But it was network and cable television that focused on it most heavily, giving it top billing for the week. By the following week, the story dropped to 14th place (1.6% of the news hole) and continued to fall to the 18th spot (.9%) the week of June 10th.

The 2008 Presidential election garnered 3.0% of all health-related coverage and came in third for the 18-month time period. Other more minor storylines during this time period were the tomato salmonella scare in June of 2008 and the staph infection superbug in October of 2007.

### Health Coverage Over Time and in the Presidential Primary Campaign

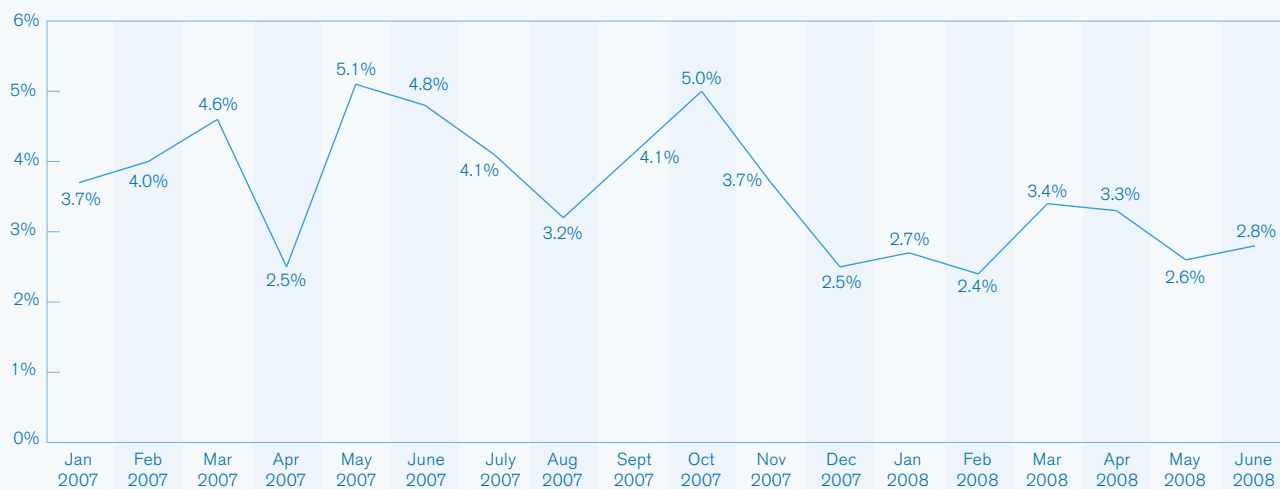
The level of health coverage month-to-month remained pretty steady, with the biggest shift occurring from April to May of 2007. In April, when the press was focused on the horrific shootings at Virginia Tech and the Don Imus scandal, health

coverage hit one of its lowest levels (2.5%). But in late May, the TB traveler story drove health coverage to 5.1% for the month of May, its highest point in the entire 18-month time period.

Beyond these small monthly fluctuations, there was an evident overall decline in health news beginning in December of 2007, just as the presidential primaries got underway. From January through November of 2007 the average news hole for health was 4.1%, but that fell to an average of 2.8% from December through June of 2008, during the primary campaign.

This suggests that despite ongoing debates about the future of our health care system, health did not become a dominant part of the 2008 primary campaign narrative. Indeed, looking at all of the presidential campaign coverage over the first six months in 2008, health-focused stories made up less than 1% of the coverage (.6%), at least in the high-profile news outlets examined in this report. Stories about Democratic stances on health policy (largely fueled by Hillary Clinton's health platform) outnumbered those that focused on Republican positions (15 stories about Democratic candidates versus 10 about Republicans).

HEALTH NEWS COVERAGE OVER TIME – PERCENT OF NEWS HOLE DEVOTED TO HEALTH



## CONCLUSION

The amount and nature of information the public receives about health and health policy matters. One of the public's primary sources of information is the news media: morning and evening network television news shows, cable news channels, newspapers, online news sites, and radio.

This study indicates that news about health occupies a relatively small amount of American news coverage across all platforms: 3.6% of news during 2007 and the first half of 2008. The amount of coverage devoted to health issues ranged from a low of 1.4% on the cable TV programs studied, up to a high of 8.3% on the television network evening newscasts.

Overall, specific diseases or conditions constituted the bulk of coverage (41.7%), followed by public health issues (30.9%) and coverage of health policy and the health care system (27.4%). Given the small portion of national news information that is dedicated to the health care system, it may be difficult for the public to become fully knowledgeable about the state of our system and potential changes under debate. Only newspapers and PBS's *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* gave more coverage to health policy issues and the health care system than to specific diseases; cable was the only medium to give more coverage to public health than to specific diseases, likely because cable programs focused on breaking news stories, including tainted food products and disease outbreaks.

As consumers migrate from broadcast to cable, and from print to online; as newspapers cut pages, reporters and editors; as the amount of advertising on TV goes up and the news hole shrinks; as all of these shifts occur, it is likely that viewers will be exposed to less news coverage of health and health policy.

Newer outlets such as cable and online certainly have the potential to expand the news hole for health, but this study indicates that they are not currently doing so in a prominent way. Health is not a large part of top-level coverage on cable or the Internet, rarely featured at the beginning of cable news shows or in the lead stories of online news sites. Thanks to cable and the Internet, consumers who are determined to seek out health news now have more resources for doing so—further down on a Web site, in a blog, or in a special health segment late in a cable news show. But for the more casual news user, health is not as big a part of the mix in these media, and that fact may have consequences in the years to come.

## METHODOLOGY

The Kaiser Family Foundation and the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) conducted this study of how the U.S. news media covered health issues over an 18-month period from January 2007 through June 2008. The analysis was based on coding conducted for PEJ's weekly News Coverage Index (NCI). Over the 18-month period, PEJ researchers coded 105,605 stories as a part of the NCI. These stories span across 48 different outlets in five media sectors, including newspapers, online, network TV, cable TV, and radio. The universe of stories was coded by a team made up of 12 trained coders, a coding administrator, and a senior research methodologist. The complete methodology of the NCI is available here: [http://journalism.org/about\\_news\\_index/methodology](http://journalism.org/about_news_index/methodology).

This report aggregates and further analyzes the subset of 3,513 U.S. health-related stories during that time. The sample includes 618 stories from newspapers, 193 stories from online Web sites, 1,416 stories from network TV, 580 stories from cable, and 706 stories from radio.

PEJ monitors 48 different news outlets each week Monday through Friday, and Sunday newspapers, including:

### Newspapers

A rotating group of seven newspapers a day, ranging from the *Modesto Bee* and *New Hampshire Union-Leader* to the *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post*, and *New York Times*. All stories on the front page with a national or international focus are captured and coded.

### Broadcast Network Television Evening News Shows

The entirety of ABC's *World News Tonight*, CBS's *Evening News*, and NBC's *Nightly News* are captured and coded every weekday. The first half-hour of every episode of PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* was also captured and coded, except that beginning March 31, 2008, coding alternated between the first and the second half-hour of the show.

### Broadcast Network Television Morning News Shows

Every Monday to Friday the first 30 minutes of ABC's *Good Morning America*, CBS's *Early Show*, and NBC's *Today* show were captured and coded.

### Daytime Cable News

Every weekday, a half-hour of news from two of the following channels was recorded between 2–2:30 p.m. ET: CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC.

### Evening Cable News

Every weekday, the first half-hour of a rotating schedule of eight news programs from CNN, Fox and MSNBC were recorded and coded, ranging from CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight* and *Anderson Cooper 360*, to Fox News's *O'Reilly Factor* and *Hannity & Colmes* to MSNBC's *Hardball* and *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*.

### Radio News Headlines

Twice a day (at 9 a.m. and again at 5 p.m. every Monday to Friday), all news headlines from ABC and CBS radio were captured and coded, as was the first half-hour of NPR's *Morning Edition* (starting January 14, 2008, coding alternated between the first half-hour of the first hour, and the first half-hour of the second hour).

### Talk Radio

Every day, the first half-hour of a rotating selection of three different talk shows was recorded and coded, ranging from Rush Limbaugh and Michael Savage to Ed Schultz and Randi Rhodes.

### Online News

Once a day (Monday to Friday), the top five stories on the following news sites were captured and coded: CNN.com, Yahoo News, MSNBC.com, Google News, and AOL News.

Stories were considered to be health-related if 50% or more of the content of the story was about one of these broad story categories:

### Health Policy/U.S. Health Care System

This category includes stories about Medicare, Medicaid, and other government health programs; health insurance; health care costs; information technology; medical training; and other issues related to the integrity of the health care system generally.

### Public Health

This category includes stories that focus on the impact of health conditions on groups of people, such as stories about pandemics, epidemics, bird flu, and environmental health concerns.

### Specific Diseases/Conditions

This category includes stories that discuss the causes, effects, or treatment of specific health conditions. Stories about medical research are included here. This category includes separate codes for:

- ALS
- Alzheimer's
- Autism
- Cancer
- Diabetes/Obesity
- Heart Disease
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health
- Other Diseases/Conditions



**THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION**

**Headquarters**

2400 Sand Hill Road  
Menlo Park, CA 94025  
phone: 650.854.9400  
fax: 650.854.4800

**Washington Offices and  
Barbara Jordan Conference Center**

1330 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005  
phone: 202.347.5270  
fax: 202.347.5274

**[www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)**



**PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM**

**PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM**

1615 L Street, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
phone: 202.419.3650  
fax: 202.419.3699

**[www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org)**