



The Health Care Blog

Everything you always wanted to know about the Health Care system. But were afraid to ask.

Public Is More Savvy than Harris Polltakers

Written August 4, 2010 by John C. Goodman

Are the nation's polltakers part of a surreptitious plot to convince us that what's good for us is bad and what's bad is good? A new Harris poll is the third in the space of a week claiming that the public (or some subset of it) is badly misinformed about the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This follows on the heels of similar polls commissioned by [Kaiser](#) and the [National Council on Aging](#) (which I have criticized at my [blog](#)).



Yet the people responding to these polls appear to have a much better understanding than those asking the questions. Consider this tidbit from Harris:

Eighty-two percent think the bill will result in rationing of health care or that it might (it won't).

Really? Well, what would a reasonable person expect to happen if (a) 32 million newly insured people try to double their consumption of health care, (b) 70 million or so additional people are moved into much more generous insurance than they have today, (c) most of the remaining 200 million people are promised preventive services without the deductibles and copays they face today and (d) almost nothing is done to increase the supply of providers?

Do you think health services are going to magically emerge from thin air? Or is it more reasonable to anticipate significant rationing?

Granted, Secretary Sebelius (apparently panicked by the looming problem) is trying to pull money out of various buckets to add to physician supply. But she will still have to deal with the same Congress that zeroed out all new money for medical education in the reform bill passed last March. At the government's [Web site](#) (designed to sell ObamaCare to a skeptical public) you can find the claim that 16,000 new doctors are being created. But this appears to mainly count students who are already in medical school and will be needed to replace retiring doctors.

Here are a few more questions on which the public perception appears to trump the Harris pollsters:

	Public's	Harris Polltakers'
Will the Health Reform Act Cause:	Answer:	Answer:
An increase in the federal deficit?	Yes	No
Higher income taxes for the middle class?	Yes	No
A cut in Medicare benefits?	Yes	No

I believe I can honestly say that I don't know a single soul who knows anything about health economics who thinks ObamaCare isn't going to increase the deficit. (If there is someone, correct me in the comment section.) Granted, the CBO was forced to assume that future Congresses and future presidents will be willing to do what the current Congress and current president are unwilling to do: [to approve huge cuts in Medicare spending](#). But even the CBO has tacitly [acknowledged they don't believe it will happen](#).

No higher taxes on the middle class? Is this some sort of lawyerly trick? Who does Harris think is going to pay the \$500 billion plus new levies on drugs, health insurance, medical devices, tanning salons, etc. Maybe they are trying to weasel with the word "income" taxes — figuring that all those other taxes are "excise" taxes. Even so, excise taxes get passed on to consumers and they're paid out of income. Moreover, the fine for not insuring (expected to bring in [\\$4 billion per year](#)) is an income tax and the government is now arguing in federal court that the [individual mandate is itself an income tax](#).

No reduction in Medicare benefits? Again, is this another lawyerly weasel word (as the [Annenberg \(fact-check\) Center suggested the other day](#))? How is it possible to reduce Medicare spending by more than half a trillion dollars and have no reduction in benefits? It isn't. And no knowledgeable person thinks it is.

John C. Goodman is president and CEO of the National Center for Policy Analysis. He is also the Kellye Wright Fellow in health care. The mission of the Wright Fellowship is to promote a more patient-centered, consumer-driven health care system. Dr. Goodman's [health policy blog](#) is considered among the top conservative health care blogs on the internet where pro-free enterprise, private sector solutions to health care problems are discussed by top health policy experts from all sides of the political spectrum.