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## Public Interest in the Use of Quality Metrics in Healthcare Is Mixed — Unless It Allows Them to Reduce Their Health Insurance Costs

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A new survey shows that the U.S. public is only modestly supportive of having health plans pay more to doctors if they have been shown to provide higher quality care to their patients. However, a sizable majority is interested in this type of plan if it helps to lower their health insurance coverage costs. The question remains: how should health plans measure quality? On the whole, the public is somewhat supportive of measures that are associated with prevention and promoting patient compliance while they are less supportive of plans that measure quality based on particular technology metrics.

These are some of the results of a Harris Interactive online survey of 2,129 U.S. adults conducted between May 11 and 13, 2005 for The Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition.

### Support for pay-for-performance system

Nearly two in five (38%) adults strongly or somewhat support having health insurance plans pay more to doctors if they have been shown to provide higher quality care to their patients. A further 17 percent oppose a pay-for-performance system and a third (32%) is indifferent, neither favoring nor opposing one. Interestingly, the more educated adults are, the more likely they are to favor a pay-for-performance system.

Public support for a pay-for-performance system increases dramatically if it helps to lower their costs. Two-thirds (67%) of adults are interested in a health insurance plan that provides access to fewer doctors, but certifies that those doctors provide higher quality care to their patients and charges consumers lower premium, deductible and co-payment charges.

# Health-Care Poll

## Support for possible quality metrics

The public seems to be supportive of certain metrics more than others that health insurance plans might use to judge the quality of care doctors provide to their patients. Metrics supported by more of the public include:

- Whether the doctor uses preventive tests like cancer screening and blood tests for high cholesterol (64%)
- Patient satisfaction surveys (57%)
- Whether the doctor uses reminder systems to prompt patients to get needed follow-up care (50%)
- Whether the doctor uses standardized guidelines to monitor the health of patients with chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes (47%)
- Whether the doctor prescribed generics rather than prescription drugs when generics are available (47%)
- Whether the doctor enrolls patients with chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes into disease management programs (45%).

Metrics receiving less support include:

- The frequency with which the doctor's patients use the emergency room for medical problems that could have been treated in the office (30%)
- Whether the doctor uses reminder systems to prompt patients to refill their prescriptions when needed (28%)
- Whether the doctor uses electronic patient medical records (18%)
- Whether the doctor uses electronic systems to prescribe drugs to patients (15%).

**TABLE 1**  
**Public Support for Pay-for-Performance System**

"To what extent do you favor or oppose having health insurance plans pay more to doctors if they have been shown to provide higher quality care to their patients?"

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Education			
		High School or Less	Some College	College Graduate	Post-graduate
	%	%	%	%	%
Support Strongly/Somewhat (NET)	38	33	39	45	50
Support strongly	13	11	13	15	15
Support somewhat	26	21	26	30	35
Neither favor nor oppose	32	36	29	29	31
Oppose Strongly/Somewhat (NET)	17	17	19	16	11
Oppose somewhat	9	10	11	8	4
Oppose strongly	8	7	8	8	7
Not sure	12	14	12	10	9

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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**TABLE 2**  
**Public Support for Different Quality Metrics**

"Here is a list of the types of information that health insurance plans might use to judge the quality of care doctors provide to their patients. Which ones, if any, would you want to see used to judge the quality of care that doctors provide to patients? Please select all that apply."

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Education			
		High School or Less	Some College	College Graduate	Post-graduate
	%	%	%	%	%
Patient satisfaction surveys	57	50	60	68	59
<b>PATIENT REMINDERS:</b>					
Whether the doctor uses reminder systems to prompt patients to get needed follow-up care	50	47	51	50	57
Whether the doctor uses reminder systems to prompt patients to refill their prescriptions when needed	28	26	28	31	35
<b>TECHNOLOGY METRICS:</b>					
Whether the doctor uses electronic patient medical records	18	14	20	21	28
Whether the doctor uses electronic systems to prescribe drugs to patients	15	12	15	19	20
<b>CLINICAL METRICS:</b>					
Whether the doctor uses preventive tests like cancer screening and blood tests for high cholesterol	64	59	66	70	72
Whether the doctor uses standardized guidelines to monitor the health of patients with chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes	47	41	48	58	53
Whether the doctor prescribed generics rather than brand-name prescription drugs when generics are available	47	47	45	49	48
Whether the doctor enrolls patients with chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes into disease management programs	45	38	48	53	57
The frequency with which the doctor's patients use the emergency room for medical problems that could have been treated in the office	30	24	31	37	39
None of these	15	18	16	8	10

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**TABLE 3**  
**Interest In Quality-Based Physician Networks**

“How interested would you be in a health insurance plan that provides access to fewer doctors, but certifies that those doctors provide higher quality care to their patients and charges you lower premium, deductible and co-payment charges?”

Base: All Adults

	All Adults	Education			
		High School or Less	Some College	College Graduate	Post-graduate
	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely/Very Interested/Interested (NET)	67	62	69	73	71
Extremely interested	9	8	7	16	6
Very interested	16	12	22	18	13
Interested	42	42	41	39	51
Not Very/Not At All Interested (NET)	33	38	31	27	29
Not very interested	18	18	17	18	18
Not at all interested	15	20	14	9	11

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Downloadable PDFs of Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Polls are posted at [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\\_wsj.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_wsj.asp).

## Methodology

This poll was conducted online in the United States between May 11 and 13, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 2,129 adults aged 18 and over. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, income and region were weighted where necessary to align with population proportions. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Sampling error for the various sub-samples of adults with a high school education or less (452), those with some college education (909), college graduates (390), and those with a postgraduate education (378), is higher and varies. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. This includes refusals to be interviewed (nonresponse), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample was not a probability sample.

*These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.*

# Health-Care Poll

## About the Survey

The Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive Health-Care Poll is an exclusive poll that is published in the award-winning Health Industry Edition of The Wall Street Journal Online at [www.wsj.com/health](http://www.wsj.com/health).

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