



PSB survey introduced at TEDMED reveals American consumer attitudes toward healthcare reform and medical advances

San Diego, October 28, 2009 – At the TEDMED conference on the future of healthcare, Penn, Schoen, & Berland Associates today released the results of a survey of American consumers' attitudes toward trends in medicine and healthcare policy. The research was conducted in consultation with TEDMED President Marc Hodosh and Founder & Chairman Emeritus Richard Saul Wurman, and measures consumer opinions on issues including healthcare reform, vaccines and pandemics, and bioethics.

"We found that healthcare is on the front burner again for Americans, and stands with the economy as a key national issue," said PSB Vice President Jonathan Kay. "In fact, 56% of Americans believe that the government should tackle reform now, despite the economy. But the news isn't all positive for the reform agenda. Fewer than 10% of respondents say that they understand the healthcare reform proposals completely, and 30% say they don't know how the reforms would impact their access to coverage. If a reform is signed into law, the government and healthcare firms will need to communicate with consumers to clarify what the new system means for them."

Americans lack clarity on how the healthcare system works, as well as on how reform might take place, which has damaged respondents' trust in institutions in the space. Although a significant majority of Americans say that the government should act on healthcare reform now, the federal government is seen as just as trustworthy (28%) on this issue as are insurance (29%) and pharmaceutical (29%) companies. Further, 30% of respondents they just don't know how the reforms would impact their access to coverage.

"Americans are wary of any of approach that suggests that the government is announcing, 'We're here from Washington and ready to help.' Accordingly the national mood on healthcare increasingly favors personal choice," said PSB Managing Director William Mann. "Nearly 50% say that the government should not take steps to curb either obesity or smoking. And majorities support allowing patients to make decisions with their doctors without government intervention even on sensitive issues like medicinal marijuana (67%) and physician-assisted suicide (62%). Consumers are clearly saying that they want real decision-making power over their medical care – the fate of any potential reform may ultimately rest on how well those expectations are met."

Other key findings include:

- 35% of consumers believe that insurance company profits are the primary driver of healthcare cost inflation.
- 80% believe that Americans are overmedicated in comparison to citizens of other industrialized nations.
- 62% say that they visit online medical websites such as WebMD to self-diagnose medical problems.
- 72% think that health insurance companies should cover the cost of non-traditional or alternative medicines.
- Only 46% plan to get a flu vaccine this year, despite widespread concern over H1N1.
- 29% believe that childhood vaccines may be a contributing cause of autism, although the CDC has not found any connection.

Methodology: The National Healthcare Survey presented at TEDMED was based on 1005 Internet interviews with US general population aged 18 and over conducted by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates from September 17-18, 2009. Overall, the margin of error is +/- 3.1%. For more information about the Survey's findings, please contact Beth Lester at blester@ps-b.com or (202) 962-3042.

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