

MEMORANDUM

TO: Colorado Medical Society
FR: Mr. Benjamin Kupersmit
RE: 2017 Post Election Health System Reform Survey
DT: March 22, 2017

Introduction

Kupersmit Research is pleased to present the results of the 2017 CMS Post Election Health Reform Survey. This memorandum focuses on the questions from the survey relevant to federal health reform; bear in mind the questions were written before the details of the AHCA were released.

The survey examined member attitudes towards:

- Proposals for reforming the health care system
- Support/opposition towards repeal of the Medicaid expansion and the conversion of Medicaid to block grants
- Expectations if more Coloradans become uninsured

We had a total of 661 CMS members complete the survey, resulting in a margin of error of $\pm 3.8\%$ at the 95% confidence level. The survey was conducted from March 1-21, 2017.

Background

We have been surveying CMS members since 2008 on health system reform, from the debate surrounding the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2008 through its implementation since; most recently, we have polled deeply regarding national health plan mergers (2015) and the Amendment 69 election here in Colorado (2016).

- In 2008, a plurality of CMS members (41%) favored a system that would preserve commercial insurance but expand the government’s role (similar to the ACA; please see question language in the Appendix below), versus 33% who favored a single payer system, 13% who preferred deregulation of commercial payers and a reduced role for government, and 2% who preferred to continue with the current (pre-2008) system.

- In our 2016 Amendment 69 research, CMS physicians expressed overwhelming opposition to the Amendment (78%-16%); at the same time, a plurality expressed support for building on the ACA moving forward.
 - A plurality (40%) said their optimal health system would be to continue to build on the ACA, while 33% favored repeal and replacement of the ACA , and 15% favored moving toward a national single payer system.

- More broadly, we have seen continued focus across the years of member surveys on a core set of issues facing our physicians:
 - A reduction in onerous administrative requirements from government and commercial payers that take time away from patient care
 - Predictable, adequate reimbursement from government payers
 - Transparency and fairness in contracting, authorization and reimbursement from commercial payers
 - Universal access to affordable health insurance for all Coloradans

2017 Post-Election Survey

We probed CMS members about ideas for health system reform that were being considered before the AHCA was formally drafted (our survey was developed from January-February, and went in the field on March 1). Some of these are in the AHCA as proposed, while others are not; we have included all of our data in the tables below.

Components of Health Reform

- As Table 1 indicates, CMS members are most optimistic about the idea of allowing the sale of commercial insurance across state lines, with 62% saying this would be an improvement over the current system (versus 10% who say it would make things “worse”).
 - CMS physicians are more skeptical about the idea of allowing payers to offer “skinnier plans” with less coverage, with more saying this would make things “worse” (49%) than “better” (40%). Similarly, 42% say that ‘higher caps’ on lifetime contribution from patients would make things worse (while 28% say “better”), 47% say reducing ‘tax deductibility of employer-provided health care’ would make things worse (30% say “better”) and 51% say that ‘higher deductible, lower premium’ plans would make things worse (27% “better”).
 - The idea of using continuous coverage provisions to encourage individuals to maintain insurance is seen even more negatively, with 58% saying this would make things “worse” and 25% saying “better.”
 - CMS physicians are most skeptical about eliminating the ‘requirement that individuals carry health insurance,’ with 65% saying this would make things “worse” and 18% saying “better.”

<i>Table 1: Components of Reform</i>	<i>Much + Somewhat better</i>	<i>Much + Somewhat worse</i>	<i>Net better</i>
<i>Q. Do you think the following reforms to the insurance system would make things better, worse or not make a real difference versus the current system for you and your patients?</i>			
Allowing insurance to be purchased across state lines	62%	10%	52
Less government regulation of plan benefits, and allowing payers to offer “skinnier” plans with less coverage of services	40	49	-9
Higher caps or maximum limits on financial contributions from patients over a lifetime	28	42	-14
Reduce tax deductibility of employer-based health care so individuals are exposed to their real health care spending and have more accountability for their costs	30	47	-17
Higher deductible plans with lower monthly premiums	27	51	-24
Continuous coverage provisions for those with pre-existing conditions that would allow insurers to charge more (up to 50% more) for those who have a break in coverage	25	58	-33
Eliminating the requirement that individuals carry health insurance	18	65	-47

Medicaid Expansion, Block Grants & State Control

- A majority of CMS physicians (61%) support keeping ‘everyone on Medicaid who was added in the ACA.’
 - One-in-five support rolling back either the entire Medicaid expansion (9%) or allowing those who were eligible pre-ACA (35,000 Coloradans) to remain, while removing those added via the eligibility expansion (254,000 Coloradans) from the rolls (12%).
 - See the appendix for full question text please.

<i>Table 2: Medicaid Expansion</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Q. In your view, should the federal government strive to:</i>	
Keep everyone on Medicaid who was added in the ACA (total of 289,000 in CO)	61%
Allow people who were eligible pre-ACA (35,000) to remain, but roll back the expansion in eligibility (and remove the 254,000)	12
Roll back the funding for the Medicaid expansion entirely	9
Other	7
Not sure	12

- After reviewing information about the issue of block grants (see Appendix), approximately one-half of CMS physicians express opposition to converting Medicaid to a block grant by a 48%-28% margin, including 36% who “strongly” oppose (versus 12% who “strongly” support).

<i>Table 3: Medicaid Block Grant</i>	
<i>Q. Given this information, do you support or oppose converting Medicaid to a block grant?</i>	
Support Strongly support 12% Somewhat support 16%	28%
Oppose Strongly oppose 36% Somewhat oppose 12%	48
Not sure	15

- There is, on the other hand, willingness to see greater control given to states to supervise Medicaid more effectively, with 58% agreeing and 25% disagreeing that states could do ‘a better job than the federal government’ in supervising Medicaid locally.

Universal Coverage

- By a 50%-31% margin, CMS physicians believe that the Colorado Medical Society should continue to work toward a health care system that ‘achieves coverage and access to health care for all Coloradans,’ with 7% unsure and 12% taking neither side on the question.
- There is little optimism that possible alternatives to taxpayer-financed health care will do “a lot” to address the problem of providing and financing care for the uninsured.
 - We see the most optimism (with 24% saying “will help a lot” and 39% saying “help some”) regarding financial support from ‘non-profit or religious organizations,’ as well as financial support from ‘other health care stakeholders’ (with 14% saying “a lot” and 47% saying “some”).
 - Approximately one-half believe that hospitals will be able to do either “a lot” (15%) or “some” (35%) to help, but 41% believe they will not be able to do much, and a majority is also skeptical that ‘additional uncompensated care from doctors’ will do “a lot” or “some” to help (given that many physicians already provide such care with very limited extra time in today’s health care climate to increase their uncompensated caseloads significantly).

<i>Table 4: Uninsured Coloradans</i>	<i>Would do a lot to help</i>	<i>Do some to help</i>	<i>Not do much</i>
<i>Do you believe that this would do a lot, some or really not much to address the problem of providing and financing care for the uninsured?</i>			
Additional uncompensated care by physicians	9%	24	57
Additional uncompensated care by hospitals	15%	35	41
Funding for care provided by other health care stakeholders, such as commercial insurers or drug companies	24%	39	25
Funding for care compensated by non-profit or religious organizations	14%	47	29

Conclusions

CMS physicians have significant concerns about efforts to reform the current health care system that would reduce coverage and increase costs for patients. We see very strong opposition to eliminating the individual mandate and the Medicaid expansion specifically, along with little confidence that the system can meet the needs of patients if the uninsured rate does indeed begin to rise in our state.

CMS physicians have spent significant time and effort focusing on health system reform for nearly a decade. They are open and willing to engage in a constructive process to address challenges in the system, and look forward to continuing our conversation with interested parties, and offering our support to those who want to create a more patient-centric system that strengthens patient-physician trust, in the days and months ahead.

Methodology

This survey was administered online by the Colorado Medical Society. The survey was in the field from March 1-March 21, 2017. A total of 661 Colorado Medical Society members responded to the survey, for a margin of error of $\pm 3.8\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

Appendix: Question Text

2008 Health System Reform

Q. If you had to choose between one of these options, or leaving the current system largely intact, which would you choose?

Private/public mix, with increased regulation of the private system and a larger role for public programs	41%
Private/public mix, with deregulation of the private system and a reduced role for public programs	13
Leaving the current system largely intact	2
Simplified payer system	33
None of the above	4
Other/SPECIFY	7

2016 Post Amendment 69

Q. If you had to choose between one of these options to achieve the optimal health care delivery system, which would you choose?

Continuing to build on the ACA , including a mix of government payers and regulated commercial payers (continuing the ban on insurers denying or pricing coverage based on condition, requiring all uninsured individuals to purchase insurance, and leaving in place the CO Health Exchange), while pursuing ideas such as a public option, allowing younger people to buy-in to Medicare, or better regulation of pharmaceutical pricing.	40%
Repealing most of the ACA , with deregulation of commercial payers and a reduced role for Medicaid (allowing insurers to price insurance based on condition, allowing sales of insurance across state lines, ending the requirement for individuals to buy insurance, and cutting taxes/eliminating subsidies for uninsured to purchase insurance)	33
Repeal the ACA and move to a single-payer system	15
Other	5
Not sure	6

Medicaid Expansion

“Another area where the new President and Congress are considering reforms to the health care system involves Medicaid, and specifically whether to repeal the Medicaid expansion in states like Colorado. As you may know, two groups of people were added to Medicaid as part of the ACA – those who were previously eligible pre-ACA, but had not been in the system (35,000 individuals in Colorado) and those who newly qualified because of an expansion in eligibility by the ACA to 138% of the poverty level (254,000 in Colorado as of 2015). In your view, should the federal government strive to:”

Medicaid Block Grants

“As you may know, there has also been discussion of changing Medicaid from its current form (where any qualifying individual receives benefits, and the federal government increases funding to meet demand) to a block grant (a fixed sum that would be determined at the federal level for each state, which would then be responsible for health care costs above that fixed sum, and would control the definitions of eligibility, program benefits, etc. within its borders).

If you want to read more about this issue, please follow this link: <http://kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/5-key-questions-medicare-block-grants-per-capita-caps/>”

Given this information, do you support or oppose converting Medicaid to a block grant?