

**EMBARGOED UNTIL
September 9, 2009**

Contact:

Brian Durand

O: 860-547-1414

C: 203-609-1636



**THE
PHYSICIANS
FOUNDATION**
HELPING **DOCTORS** HELP

NEW REPORT TO PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS ADDRESSES 'SERIOUS OVERSIGHTS' IN NATIONAL HEALTH CARE DEBATE

Boston, Mass. – A report commissioned by The Physicians Foundation, a national healthcare organization that represents the interests of physicians, raises new questions about the role of socioeconomic determinants as they relate to access, quality, and cost of medical care in the United States. The report, prepared by a team of noted physicians and economists headed by Richard “Buz” Cooper, MD, Professor of Medicine and Senior Fellow at the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, University of Pennsylvania, was sent to the President and Congress today in order to contribute to the national health care debate.

The report, entitled “Physicians and their Practices under Health Care Reform,” highlights several important concerns that the report’s authors believe have been left out of the health care discussion, including: the growing problem of physician shortages, the changes in physicians' practices that will be necessary in a reformed health care system, and the pervasive effects of poverty and other social determinants which impact variation in access, quality and cost of care.

The full report can be viewed at www.physiciansfoundation.org.

“In preparing this report, our goal was to create a realistic, common-sense framework that will assist legislators in crafting policy in ways that address the needs of both doctors and patients and that lead to a stronger and more cost-effective health care system,” said Dr. Cooper. “It’s clear that without adequate numbers of physicians, the health care system cannot function effectively; without adequate attention to the structure of physician practices, the system cannot function efficiently; and without adequate attention to the pervasive the social determinants of health, it cannot function economically.”

“We are at a rare moment in history when important decisions are being made that will impact doctors, their patients and the entire healthcare delivery system for many years to come, if not forever,” said Lou Goodman, PhD, President of The Physicians Foundation. “The Physicians Foundation commissioned this report in order to bring new perspectives to the discussions of health care reform. We believe that the report will add richness to the policy discussions as they resume this fall.”

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For more information about the report and about The Physicians Foundation please visit www.physiciansfoundation.org.

The Cooper Report: Talking Points for The Physicians' Foundation

September, 2009

The Umbrella Message

This is the overarching message that we want our targets to take away from the report:

We are at a rare moment in history when important decisions are being made that will impact doctors, their patients and the entire healthcare delivery system for many years to come, if not forever. At The Physicians' Foundation we firmly believe that legislators, policy makers and the public should be as well informed as possible on issues surrounding the health system reform debate. President Obama has said that America shouldn't be afraid to have open discussions about important, sensitive issues, and that we should challenge conventional thinking with new ideas.

To that end, this report highlights several important concerns that heretofore have been left out of the discussion: the growing problem of physician shortages, the changes in physicians' practices that will be necessary in a reformed health care system and the pervasive effects of poverty and other social determinants which impact variation in access, quality and cost of care.

Our goal is to help create a realistic, common-sense framework that helps address the needs of both doctors and patients, and that supports the broader effort to further our nation's health care system.

Physicians Foundation Overall Stance on the Report

While we assume that the brunt of media inquiries will be handled by Dr. Cooper or members of his team, we do want the Foundation to have a formal answer if and as they are asked about the report. While each inquiry should be handled independently and based on its content, we think all answers should be given within the following framework.

The Physicians' Foundation commissioned this Report in order to bring new perspectives to the discussions of health care reform. We believe that the Report will add richness to the policy discussions as they resume this fall.

Specific Questions and Answers

The following are some specific questions we believe might be asked of the Foundation by the press, along with suggested answer frameworks.

Why did you commission this report?

At The Physicians' Foundation we firmly believe that legislators, policy makers and the public should be as well informed as possible on issues surrounding the health system reform debate. We believe that

the report will add richness to the policy discussions as they resume this fall. Our hope is that the report will help inform a realistic, common-sense framework for reform that will help solve the nation's health care problems.

Do you view it as a direct challenge to the Dartmouth study?

In order to reform health care, we need to understand how health care costs work. President Obama has said that we should challenge conventional wisdom with new ideas, and we feel the same way. There is a conventional wisdom that has taken root over the past decade regarding why there are higher expenditures in some areas than others. While not being dismissive of those points of view, we want to be clear that outlook on this important issue is different – and, we believe, directly relevant. This report contends that poverty and other socioeconomic determinants are major contributors to the variation in health care expenditures in different populations and to excessive spending overall, and that in the current debate this idea is not being understood or even taken into account.

Is the Physicians Foundation pro healthcare reform?

Yes, we believe there are problems in our system that must be addressed, but unfortunately over the past few months it's become clear that policymakers have learned that reforming health care is not as simple or as easy as they might have hoped. They've realized that something is missing from the debate, and it's our hope that this report fills in that gap by providing a new and necessary framework for the discussion. It's never too late to put new and relevant information on the table in any debate.

Are you concerned about the suggestion that physicians assistants and nurse practitioners should take on more of a role in primary care?

It's no secret that the nation's doctor shortage has left the diminishing number of practicing physicians overburdened. As such, it's critical that we maximize the amount of time doctors have to treat major illness and disease. One part of how you do that is by delegating, where possible or appropriate, some of the general care of patients to qualified midlevel clinicians – principally nurse practitioners or physician assistants – with physicians maintaining ongoing formal oversight of patient care.

PLEASE NOTE:

If, in the course of speaking to a reporter (or a colleague, or anyone else), you receive a question that you do not feel comfortable answering for any reason whatsoever, or if the questions reach a level of detail regarding the report's content that you feel uncomfortable with, do not feel obligated to try and answer the question. Instead, simply explain to the reporter that you are happy to put them directly in touch with Dr. Cooper, who as the author of the report will be able to more fully answer their question. You can give any reporter Dr. Cooper's cell phone number directly: 215 667 9806.



THE
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HELPING DOCTORS HELP

September 8, 2009

Michael D. Maves, MD, Executive Vice President
American Medical Association
515 N. State Street
Chicago, IL 60654

Dear Dr. Maves:

We're writing to let you know that a research report is being released publicly tomorrow, commissioned by The Physicians Foundation, that we think you will find interesting. It's entitled "Physicians and Their Practices Under Health Care Reform: A Report to the President and the Congress." The research was conducted by a team of noted physicians, led by Richard Cooper, MD, Professor of Medicine and Senior Fellow at the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, University of Pennsylvania. The report will be posted on our website at www.physiciansfoundation.org.

The Physicians' Foundation firmly believes that legislators, policy makers and the public should be as well informed as possible on issues surrounding the health care debate. To that end, this report highlights several important concerns that heretofore have been left out of the discussion: the growing problem of physician shortages, the changes in physicians' practices that will be necessary in a reformed health care system and the pervasive effects of poverty and other social determinants which impact variation in access, quality and cost of care.

Like you, we have been intently following the national debate on healthcare reform. While our respective organizations are different in some important ways, we share a desire to promote improvements in the physicians' practice environments, and are concerned about how any reforms – large or small in scope – will impact the healthcare delivery system. It is in that spirit that we commissioned this report.

We are at a rare moment in history when important decisions are being made that will impact doctors, their patients, and the entire healthcare delivery system for many years to come, if not forever. As such we want to make sure that every important decision is made with as much relevant information as possible. President Obama has said that America shouldn't be afraid to have open discussions about important, sensitive issues, and that we should challenge conventional thinking with new ideas. We feel the same way. To date, much of the information in this report has not been part of the debate; we feel strongly that it needs to be.

As concerned citizens, we want what's best for our country. As an organization, we want what's best for physicians and their patients. Those goals ought not to be viewed as contradictory; in fact, we believe they complement each other quite well.

It is in that spirit that we commissioned this report.

Louis J. Goodman, PhD, *President*

Timothy B. Norbeck, *Executive Director*

The Physicians Foundation
77 Summer Street, 8th Floor
Boston, MA 02110 617-399-0417
www.physiciansfoundation.org



September 8, 2009

Dear Medical Society Executive:

We're writing to let you know that a research report is being released publicly tomorrow, commissioned by The Physicians Foundation, that we think you'll find interesting. It's entitled "Physicians and Their Practices Under Health Care Reform: A Report to the President and the Congress." The research was conducted by a team of noted physicians, led by Richard Cooper, MD, Professor of Medicine and Senior Fellow at the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, University of Pennsylvania. The report will be posted on our website at www.physiciansfoundation.org.

The Physicians' Foundation firmly believes that legislators, policy makers and the public should be as well informed as possible on issues surrounding the health care debate. To that end, this report highlights several important concerns that heretofore have been left out of the discussion: the growing problem of physician shortages, the changes in physicians' practices that will be necessary in a reformed health care system and the pervasive effects of poverty and other social determinants which impact variation in access, quality and cost of care.

We believe this report could serve several important purposes over the next few months, and years, as the healthcare reform debate continues to unfold and policy changes are made, be they incremental changes or systemic changes. It has short-term implications for the debate over how to change the system, and long-term implications for the implementation of whatever changes are decided upon.

We are at a rare moment in history when important decisions are being made that will impact doctors, their patients, and the entire healthcare delivery system for many years to come, if not forever. As such we want to make sure that every important decision is made with as much relevant information as possible. President Obama has said that America shouldn't be afraid to have open discussions about important, sensitive issues, and that we should challenge conventional thinking with new ideas. We feel the same way.

To date, much of the information in this report has not been part of the debate; we feel strongly that it needs to be.

Please call us if you have any questions.

Louis J. Goodman, PhD, *President*

Timothy B. Norbeck, *Executive Director*