

The Future of Health Care

The most recent policy debate over health care has been largely centered around insurance and cost. While the current debate over the ACA and implications for cost and insurance are very important, there is a larger concern among the electorate about the direction of health care and the kind of system that the country will have in the future. The most recent survey for Winning the Issues shows that by about 2:1, the electorate is more concerned about the way that health care of the future is going (59%) than the way health care is today (33%).

Which concerns you more?

The way that health care is today	33
The way that health care of the future is going	59

The focus on the future of health care transcends age and is shared by both young voters (30-61 today-future) and seniors (34-59 today-future). Despite the electorate's concern about the future, current policy discussions tend to be somewhat disconnected from scientific advancements that are being made at a rapid pace.

Here are a few examples of the medical breakthroughs that have been announced within the past month:

1.) Earlier this week, Alphabet announced a new longitudinal health study using genome sequencing and health trackers to create a "Google Maps for health care," a tremendous resource for understanding disease history and developing cures. (Link for more information <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/04/18/alphabet-verily-project-baseline-longitudinal-health-study.html>)

2.) At the end of March, the FDA approved a breakthrough drug to treat a severe form of multiple sclerosis. (Link for more information https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/28/health/fda-drug-approved-multiple-sclerosis-ocrevus.html?emc=edit_nn_20170329&nl=morning-briefing&nid=74371299&te=1&r=0)

3.) Earlier this month, CNBC announced that Apple has undertaken a secret initiative to develop a new way to monitor blood sugar levels non-invasively and on a continuous basis, described as a "holy grail" for fighting diabetes. (Link for more information <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/04/12/apple-working-on-glucose-sensors-diabetes-treatment.html>)

4.) Researchers are developing a way to use CRISPR gene-editing technology to create an extremely precise anti-microbial treatment that would target specific bacteria to self-destruct, helping prevent antibiotic resistance. (Link for more information <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/604126/edible-crispr-could-replace-antibiotics/>)

These kinds of scientific advancements present major opportunities to improve quality of care and expand the amount of health care available to patients, which will help lower cost and positively impact entitlement programs like Medicare. This is in addition to innovations being developed in other key areas such as delivery of health care and improvements in the way the health system interacts with patients. As part of the immediate discussions about how to deal with problems in the health care system, the future of health care and the opportunities that exist should be a key part of those discussions.

Have a good weekend!

David & Myra