

Recent Literature Worth Noting

The journal, *Health Affairs*, periodically publishes peer-reviewed articles exclusively on its website. According to the journal's policy these articles are selected based on their timeliness and relevance to the contemporary policy debate. They are available in either HTML or PDF format; access is free to all site visitors. See www.healthaffairs.com

Current web articles include:

Tracking Health Care Costs

Hospital care surpasses drugs as the key cost driver.

Bradley C. Strunk, Paul B. Ginsburg, and Jon R. Gabel, September 26, 2001

A Bias toward Action: A Conversation with Leonard Schaeffer
The leader of WellPoint makes no secret of his belief in getting consumers the health care they want.

John K. Iglehart, August 22, 2001

Targeting Communities with High Rates of Uninsured Children
Despite improved eligibility, enrollment outreach remains the key to getting children insured.

Peter J. Cunningham, July 25, 2001

Reevaluation of Capitation Contracting In New York And California

Recent data on physician contracting in New York and California by Aetna U.S. Healthcare shows a retreat from the strategy of delegating financial risk and gatekeeping functions to providers.

James Robinson and Lawrence Casalino, May 17, 2001

A Flexible Benefits Tax Credit for Health Insurance and More
Policymakers have a unique opportunity to do the right thing for the uninsured in a way that could benefit all Americans.

Lynn Etheredge, March 22, 2001

From the *British Medical Journal*, No. 7316 Vol. 323
COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS AFFECT ONE IN FOUR 999
AMBULANCE CALLS

<http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/323/7316/781>

Communication problems affect more than a quarter of emergency ambulance calls. A sample of 999 calls received by West Midlands Ambulance Service and Derbyshire Ambulance Service during one week of December 1998 was assessed for communication difficulties. Of 1830 calls, 26% were associated with a communication problem that delayed ambulance dispatch or prevented delivery of first aid advice. The emotional state of the caller was the most common reason for communication problems occurring. Calls from mobile phones and payphones also generated a higher rate of problems than those from land lines.

PUBLIC SATISFACTION WITH DOCTORS HIGH,

DESPITE BAD PRESS

<http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/323/7316/782>

National newspapers in the UK contain twice as many negative stories about doctors as positive ones, yet 89% of the public remain satisfied with the way that doctors do their jobs. Every article published about doctors in the *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, and *Daily Mail* in November from 1980 to 2000 were studied and coded as positive, negative, or neutral towards doctors. Taken together, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, and *Daily Mail* contained more than twice as many negative stories about doctors as positive ones, but there was no significant change in the ratio of negative to positive stories over time

NHS POLICIES FAIL TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN EQUITY AND EFFICIENCY

<http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/323/7316/762>

The NHS is facing a dilemma between the goals of equity and efficiency. An editorial in the *British Medical Journal* reports that there is no consensus on how to deal with policies that may cause conflict, often leading to inconsistent judgements in the development of health policies.

From the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, JAMA. 2001;286:1213-1217

Establishing Health Care Performance Standards in Era of Consumerism

W. Kizer, MD, MPH

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v286n10/abs/jsc00447.html>

As the US health care system begins to reengineer itself to address the need for quality improvement, it also is being actively reshaped by the expectations of consumers. The confluence of these forces requires a new approach to setting health care performance standards.

The National Quality Forum (NQF) has been established as a profit, open membership, public benefit corporation for the purposes of developing consensus about standardized health care performance measures, reporting mechanisms, and a national strategy for health care quality improvement. The NQF has broad representation from all segments of the healthcare industry and provides an equitable way of addressing the disparate priorities of healthcare's many stakeholders. Agreement and implementation of standardized healthcare performance measures and achievement of quality improvement in the emerging era of consumerism will be facilitated by (1) establishing national goals for healthcare quality; (2) embracing public policy that recognizes the complementary roles of quality improvement, cost control, and improved access; (3) giving greater priority to measuring and reporting the performance of those aspects of the healthcare system that directly affect consumers; (4) focusing on creating a health care culture of excellence; and (5) promoting the active collaboration of all stakeholders.