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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 14, 2009

Contact: Brandon Maitlen/RWJF
202-745-5117

Mount Sinai Newsroom
212-241-9200
NewsMedia@mssm.edu

MAJORITY OF PHYSICIANS SUPPORT HEALTH REFORM THAT INCLUDES BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSURANCE OPTIONS

*Study Published Today by the New England Journal of Medicine
Shows Strong Physician Support for Mixed Public-Private Proposal*

Princeton, N.J. – A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) study published in today's *New England Journal of Medicine* shows that a majority of physicians (63 percent) support a health reform proposal that includes both a public option and traditional private insurance. If the additional 10 percent of doctors who support an entirely public health system are included, then approximately three out of four physicians nationwide support inclusion of a public option. A minority (27 percent) support a private-only option that would provide subsidies for low-income individuals to purchase private insurance.

Surveying a nationally representative sample of 2,130 physicians across America, researchers Salomeh Keyhani, M.D., M.P.H., and Alex Federman, M.D., M.P.H., from Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City queried physicians about a range of options for expanding health insurance coverage. They also examined physician views on the possibility of Medicare expansion and found that the majority of physicians surveyed (58 percent) support expanding Medicare eligibility to those between the ages of 55 and 64.

“There should be no confusion about where doctors stand in the debate over expanding health insurance coverage: they want reform,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “This survey reveals important information about the perspective of physicians on issues central to the health reform debate. Policy makers should listen to their doctors.”

The researchers surveyed physicians from a variety of practice backgrounds (private practice, salaried, practice owners, hospitalists), specialty backgrounds (primary care providers, medical subspecialists, surgeons) and geographic locations across the United States between June 25 and Sept. 3. While the survey was conducted in several “waves” over this period, no statistically significant differences were found in responses from different points throughout the summer. Regardless of region of the country, practice backgrounds, or specialties, a majority of physicians said they support a combination of public and private options. Among those physicians who identified themselves as members of the American Medical Association, 62.2 percent favored both the public and private options.

“We analyzed the data in multiple ways to understand physician opinion on health reform,” said study author, Salomeh Keyhani, M.D., M.P.H. “We found that no matter how you sliced the data, physicians demonstrated majority support for a public health insurance option, regardless of their type of practice or where they live.”

“These results give voice to individual physicians in the national discussion about health reform,” said study author, Alex Federman, M.D., M.P.H. “Most often we hear the opinions of special interest groups rather than doctors themselves, but we know that Americans want to hear the opinions of doctors like those who treat them. This study lets us hear the unfiltered views of physicians on key elements of health reform and should be useful for lawmakers.”

In addition to identifying views of public and private insurance options, the survey explored physician’s views of how Medicare performed when compared to private insurance. The majority of physicians surveyed found Medicare better or the same as private insurance in decision making autonomy (60 percent) and in ease of obtaining needed services (57 percent). Overall, a plurality (46 percent) of physicians who saw patients whose treatment was covered by Medicare in the past five years consider their experiences with private insurance better than traditional Medicare when it comes to payment, administrative issues, and timeliness of reimbursement.

To read the full study, visit [INSERT LINK TO RWJF STUDY](#).

To read the New England Journal of Medicine commentary, visit ([INSERT RWJF LINK TO THE NEJM STUDY](#)).

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The Mount Sinai Medical Center encompasses The Mount Sinai Hospital and Mount Sinai School of Medicine. The Mount Sinai Hospital is one of the nation’s oldest, largest and most-respected voluntary hospitals. Founded in 1852, Mount Sinai today is a 1,171-bed tertiary-care teaching facility that is internationally acclaimed for excellence in clinical care. Last year, nearly 50,000 people were treated at Mount Sinai as inpatients, and there were nearly 450,000 outpatient visits to the Medical Center. Mount Sinai School of Medicine is internationally recognized as a leader in groundbreaking clinical and basic science research, as well as having an innovative approach to medical education. With a faculty of more than 3,400 in 38 clinical and basic science departments and centers, Mount Sinai ranks among the top 20 medical schools in receipt of National Institute of Health (NIH) grants. For more information, please visit www.mountsinai.org.