
Toplines



The Kaiser Family Foundation

***A Study of Media Coverage of Health Policy:
1997-2000***

December 2001

Methodology

Print Sources

Newspaper sources were selected to present a representative sample of health care coverage related to the four policy areas (managed care, Medicare, the uninsured, and health care costs) available to the public. Selections were made on both a geographic and a demographic basis, as well as diversity of ownership. The *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *USA Today* were selected to represent publications most likely to be circulated amongst either policy makers or the public on a nationwide basis. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsday (Long Island)*, and the *Seattle Times* represented the nation's major metropolitan dailies.

Assessment began by cataloguing the articles that appeared in each publication from January 1, 1997 through December 31, 2000. The LEXIS-NEXIS database was used to quantify that coverage for all publications except the *Wall Street Journal*, for which the Dow Jones DataBase was utilized. Search language was designed to cast the widest net possible with respect to capturing pertinent stories. The following search language was utilized: *hlead ((hmo) or (health maintenance organization) or (health insurance) or (managed care) or (patient! bill of rights) or (patient protection) or (health care costs) or (health care prices) or (prescription costs) or (prescription prices) or (consumer bill of rights) or (Medicare) or (uninsured)) or term((hmo) or (health maintenance organization) or (health insurance) or (managed care) or (patient! bill of rights) or (patient protection) or (health care costs) or (health care prices) or (prescription costs) or (prescription prices) or (consumer bill of rights) or (Medicare) or (uninsured)) or ((Gore and health or Medicare) or (Bradley and health or Medicare) or (Bush and health or Medicare) or (McCain and health or Medicare).*

This language captured all stories where any of the health care search terms were in the headline or lead percentage of the article; all stories indexed by NEXIS via any of the search terms; or any story that included the surname of one of the leading presidential candidates, together with any mention of health or Medicare. Comparable language was used to search the *Wall Street Journal* database in February 2001 to establish the sample for that publication.

A preliminary universe of 47,618 stories was established from which one in every 3.25 stories was selected beginning with a randomly generated starting point. Additional inclusion rules were then established. For inclusion, stories must equal or exceed 100 words AND any designated health policy topic must be referenced in the headline, subhead, or 3 lead paragraphs OR 1/3 or more of the text of the article must be directly related to one of the designated health policy topics. Obituaries and letters to the editor were also deleted from the sample. This resulted in the final newspaper total of 4,575 sampled stories, representing the 14,869 story universe of total health policy stories meeting our inclusion criteria in these papers over this time frame.

Broadcast Sources

Broadcast news stories from *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News*, and *NBC Nightly News* were acquired from the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives. To review all stories that appeared January 1, 1997 through December 31, 2000, the Vanderbilt archives were searched for all stories where the index monograph included the terms “managed care”, “managed health care”, “HMO” or “health maintenance organization”; “patients’ bill of rights”; “health care NOT medicine”; “Medicare”; “prescription drugs” or “pharmaceuticals”; and “uninsured”. This resulted in a total universe of 505 stories. One of every two stories was selected at intervals for the sample after a randomly generated start point. After viewing by senior staff, false hits were eliminated using the established inclusion rule. The resulting network news sample totaled 178 stories.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability measures the extent to which coders, operating autonomously, code or classify the same story in the same way. Intercoder reliability tests were performed throughout this study, with senior staff acting as the control coder; no significant differences were found to exist on a recurring basis. Selected stories were double-coded in their entirety, and overall intercoder reliability exceeded 88% for all variables.

Notes on Topline

Coding rules and variable definitions are included in the topline with each variable. Values less than .5 percent are indicated by an asterisk (*) while a dash (-) indicates a value of zero. Some results will not add to 100% due to rounding.

The Kaiser Family Foundation is an independent, national health philanthropy dedicated to providing information and analysis on health issues to policymakers, the media, and the general public. The Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

	<u>Total (number)</u>	<u>Print (number)</u>	<u>Broadcast (number)</u>
1. SOURCE			
All Print	4,575	4,575	-
All National Newspapers	1,897	1,897	-
<i>NY Times</i>	658	658	-
<i>USA Today</i>	246	246	-
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	421	421	-
<i>Washington Post</i>	572	572	-
All Regional Newspapers	2,678	2,678	-
<i>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>	328	328	-
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	468	468	-
<i>Houston Chronicle</i>	453	453	-
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	775	775	-
<i>Newsday (NY)</i>	346	346	-
<i>Seattle Times</i>	308	308	-
All Broadcast	178	-	178
<i>ABC World News Tonight</i>	59	-	59
<i>CBS Evening News</i>	61	-	61
<i>NBC Nightly News</i>	58	-	58
	<u>Total %</u>	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>

2. DATE

1997	22	22	24
1998	21	21	19
1999	28	28	32
2000	29	29	26

3. POSITION/PLACEMENT

<i>Newspapers Only</i>			
Page One		9	-
National/International		29	-
Editorial/OP ED		11	-
Business		28	-
Metro/Local/Regional		17	-
Style/Life		1	-
Sunday Sections		*	-
Weekly Section - Health/Science		3	-
Other		1	-
Don't Know/Can't Tell		1	-
<i>Broadcast Only</i>			
Top Third		-	43
Middle Third		-	33
Bottom Third		-	24

	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>
4. STORY LENGTH		
<i>Print</i>		
less than 150 words	10	-
150 - 399 words	23	-
400 - 699 words	29	-
700 - 1199 words	28	-
1200 words and above	11	-
<i>Broadcast</i>		
Up to 30 seconds	-	15
31 sec. to 2 minutes	-	22
Longer than 2 minutes	-	63

5. WIRE SERVICE

Staff reporter(s)	72	100
AP Wire	8	-
Bloomberg Business News	3	-
Chicago Tribune Service	*	-
Gannett	*	-
Knight-Ridder	*	-
LA Times Wire Service	1	-
Medical News Service	-	-
NY Times Wire Service	2	-
Religious News Service	-	-
Reuters	1	-
UPI	-	-
Washington Post	1	-
Combo - News Service/Staff	4	-
OP/ED - Non-Staff	5	-
Other Wire Service	2	-
Don't Know/Can't Tell	1	-

	<u>Total %</u>	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>
6. DATELINE			
California	14	15	3
Connecticut	1	1	1
District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.)	34	33	44
Georgia	6	6	-
Illinois	7	8	3
Maryland	*	*	1
New Jersey	1	1	1
New York	22	22	31
Texas	6	6	2
Virginia	*	*	1
Washington	3	3	1
U. S. Territories	-	-	-
Unknown (no dateline)	*	*	1
Other U.S. Datelines	6	6	13
Not A U.S. Dateline	1	1	-

7. STORY TYPE

Lengthy Interview	1	1	-
News Event	49	49	66
Backgrounder	26	26	25
Profile	1	1	2
News Analysis	1	1	-
Commentary/Opinion	7	7	1
Editorial	6	6	-
Bullet Item	6	6	2
Column/Feature	3	3	4

8. HEALTH POLICY TOPIC

The Health Policy area which dominated the news story by receiving the greatest share of the story's coverage. When there were equal elements of more than one Health Policy area, coders defaulted to the top of the article and coded based on that segment of the news story.

Managed Care/HMO/PBOR*/Health Insurance	48	48	37
Medicare	28	28	36
The Uninsured	12	12	12
Health Care Costs	12	12	15

* *Health Maintenance Organization/Patients' Bill of Rights*

	<u>Total %</u>	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>
9. RECURRING LEADS			
The big stories that have a finite life, or those defined issues that emerge, subside, and may re-emerge over time, that are tied to the news story.			
Managed Care Business	11	11	2
Market Place Woes	7	7	10
Patients' Bill of Rights	9	9	16
Pharmaceutical Costs	4	4	6
The Uninsured	6	6	5
Elections and Health Care	8	8	8
Medicare Fraud	6	6	11
Medicare Solvency	4	4	7
HMOs joining and leaving Medicare	2	2	1
Medicare and a Prescription Drug Benefit	4	3	6
Medicare and 1997 Budget	2	2	2
Medicare Means Test	1	1	2
Other	3	3	4
Not Connected to a Recurring Lead	35	36	21

10. DOMINANT FOCUS

Summary of major and secondary topics within a story. Major topics had to be the focus of at least 1/3 of the story and secondary topics had to be the focus of 1/5 of the story. While all stories had major topics, some did not have secondary topics.

Descriptions of the Health Care System	19	19	10
Economic/Business Issues	38	38	33
Population Figures/Demographics	10	10	13
Delivery of Medical Care	20	20	26
Politics	41	40	48
Outside Systems	1	1	-
Policy Choices	24	25	23
Other	15	15	19

Note: Can exceed 100% due to multiple selections within stories

	<u>Total %</u>	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>
11. DOMINANT NEWSMAKER			
Summary of the major and secondary newsmakers in each story. Major newsmakers had to be the focus of at least 1/3 of the story and secondary newsmakers had to be the focus of 1/5 of the story.			
Executive Branch	12	12	20
Presidential Candidates	6	6	8
Legislative Branch	16	16	26
Judicial Branch	3	3	1
Federal Government	12	12	15
State/Local Officials	17	18	4
Interested Parties	8	8	12
Policy Interest Entities	16	16	8
Scientific/Medical Community (All)	48	48	45
<i>HMOS/Insurers/Health Plans Only</i>	23	23	17
<i>Pharmaceutical Companies Only</i>	3	3	3
<i>Health Care Professionals Only</i>	7	7	11
<i>Hospitals Only</i>	9	9	7
Celebrities/Public Figures	*	*	-
Media	1	1	1
Patient Populations (All)	12	12	22
<i>Uninsured Only</i>	2	2	3
Academics/Experts	3	3	2
Other	4	4	5
No Major Newsmaker	*	*	1
No Secondary Newsmaker	26	27	15

Note: Can exceed 100% due to multiple selections within stories

12. NEWSMAKER TONE

Designates the story as “good press” or “bad press” for the Major Newsmaker. Coders did not use hard facts, but rather looked at the interpretation or innuendos the reporter offered in order to code for tone. The number of positive or negative assertions or innuendos was counted and had to reach a ratio of 2:1, either positive or negative, to be coded as having tone. Any “tone” segment in the headline was given twice the weight.

Major Newsmaker mainly criticized for:

Policy matters	12	12	12
Personal qualities	3	3	-
Political position	4	3	4

Major Newsmaker not criticized, not praised, or addressed ambiguously	65	65	70
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Major Newsmaker mainly praised for:

Political position	4	4	2
Personal qualities	3	3	2
Policy matters	10	10	9

No Major Newsmaker	1	1	1
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Total % Print % Broadcast %

13. OPTIMISM/PESSIMISM

An evaluation of the innuendo and interpretation by the journalist or newsmakers in discussing the likelihood of finding solutions to problems related to the story’s Health Policy topic. The number of optimistic or pessimistic assertions or innuendos was counted and had to reach a ratio of 2:1, either optimistic or pessimistic, to be coded as such. Any innuendo in the headline was given twice the weight.

Optimistic	24	24	21
Neutral/ambiguous	35	35	39
Pessimistic	21	20	30
Not Applicable (as they did not address long-term problems pertinent to the health policy area)	20	21	10

14. LEVEL OF IMPACT

Designates the population on which the story focused as most likely to be affected by the pertinent health policy within each news story.

Impact On People	23	24	26
Impact On Communities (includes states/cities)	11	11	8
Impact On Health Care Profession/Professionals	4	3	3
Impact On Overall Health Care Systems	16	16	11
Impact On Politics	23	22	30
Impact On The Economy Or Business	16	16	4
Impact On The Nation (Non-Political)	8	7	16

15. ANECDOTAL DRAMA LEVEL

Excluding hypothetical situations, stories were coded according to the most dramatic event included in the story. References to either life-threatening or life-altering events were coded as high drama; situations where the subject experienced stress, anxiety, and concern were coded as some drama; and all other cases with anecdotal references were coded for negligible drama.

Anecdotal reference, negligible drama	8	8	11
Anecdotal reference, some drama	8	7	26
Anecdotal reference, high drama	5	5	13
No anecdotal reference	79	80	49

	<u>Total %</u>	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>
16. VILLAIN			
An evaluation that distinguishes the villain established by the journalist within each piece.			
President Clinton	*	*	1
Hillary Clinton	*	*	-
Democratic politician(s) - Other	*	*	-
Republican politician(s) - Other	*	*	1
Congressional Committees	*	*	-
Courts/Judiciary	*	*	-
Federal/State Agencies	1	1	-
Doctors - Unspecified or Both	*	*	-
Doctors - Family Practice/Primary Care	*	*	-
Doctors - Specialists	*	*	-
Health Care Professionals (Doctors Excluded)	*	*	-
Professional Organizations/Associations	*	*	-
Bureaucrats	1	1	2
Insurance Companies			
<i>(Managed Care/HMO specified)</i>	5	5	13
<i>(Managed Care/HMO excluded)</i>	1	1	3
Hospitals/Clinics	1	1	3
Health Care Professionals/Industry - general	*	*	1
Pharmaceutical Companies	1	1	2
Pharmacy Benefit Managers	*	*	-
Big Business (as employers re: benefits)	*	*	1
Small Business (as employers re: benefits)	*	*	-
Patients/Families	*	*	-
The Uninsured	-	-	-
Consumer Groups	*	*	-
Underclass groups	-	-	-
Upper-class groups	*	*	-
The American Public	*	*	-
Elderly/Sr. Citizens	*	*	-
Medicare Recipients	*	*	-
Bill Bradley	-	-	-
Al Gore (as candidate)	*	*	-
Joseph Lieberman (as candidate)	-	-	-
George W. Bush (as candidate)	*	*	-
Dick Cheney (as candidate)	*	*	-
John McCain (as candidate)	-	-	-
Presidential Candidate - other	-	-	-
Other	1	1	3
No VILLAIN portrayed	87	88	70

	<u>Total %</u>	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>
17. VICTIM			
An evaluation that distinguishes the victim established by the journalist within each piece.			
President Clinton	-	-	-
Hillary Clinton	-	-	-
Democratic politician(s) - Other	-	-	1
Republican politician(s) - Other	*	*	-
Congressional Committees	*	*	-
Courts/Judiciary	-	-	-
Federal/State Agencies	*	*	-
Doctors - Unspecified or Both	1	1	2
Doctors - Family Practice/Primary Care	*	*	-
Doctors - Specialists	*	*	-
Health Care Professionals (Doctors Excluded)	*	*	1
Professional Organizations/Associations	-	-	-
Bureaucrats	*	*	1
Insurance Companies			
<i>(Managed Care/HMO specified)</i>	*	*	-
<i>(Managed Care/HMO excluded)</i>	*	*	-
Hospitals/Clinic	1	1	1
Health Care Professionals/Industry - general	*	*	-
Pharmaceutical Companies	*	*	-
Pharmacy Benefit Managers	*	*	-
Big Business (as employers re: benefits)	*	*	-
Small Business (as employers re: benefits)	*	*	-
Patients/Families	7	6	13
The Uninsured	2	2	3
Consumer Groups	*	*	-
Underclass groups	1	1	1
Upper-class groups	*	*	-
The American Public	4	3	17
Elderly/Sr. Citizens	1	1	4
Medicare Recipients	2	2	4
Bill Bradley	*	*	-
Al Gore (as candidate)	*	*	-
Joseph Lieberman (as candidate)	-	-	-
George W. Bush (as candidate)	*	*	-
Dick Cheney (as candidate)	-	-	-
John McCain (as candidate)	-	-	-
Presidential Candidate - other	*	*	1
Other	*	*	-
No VICTIM portrayed	77	78	52

	<u>Total %</u>	<u>Print %</u>	<u>Broadcast %</u>
18. HERO/HEROINE			
An evaluation that distinguishes the hero/heroine established by the journalist within each piece.			
President Clinton	1	1	3
Hillary Clinton	*	*	1
Democratic politician(s) - Other	1	1	3
Republican politician(s) - Other	1	1	-
Congressional Committees	-	-	-
Courts/Judiciary	1	1	-
Federal/State Agencies	1	1	1
Doctors - Unspecified or Both	*	*	-
Doctors - Family Practice/Primary Care	*	*	1
Doctors - Specialists	*	*	-
Health Care Professionals (Doctors Excluded)	*	*	-
Professional Organizations/Associations	*	*	-
Bureaucrats	*	*	2
Insurance Companies			
<i>(Managed Care/HMO specified)</i>	*	*	-
<i>(Managed Care/HMO excluded)</i>	*	*	-
Hospitals/Clinics	*	*	-
Health Care Professionals/Industry - general	*	*	-
Pharmaceutical Companies	*	*	-
Pharmacy Benefit Managers	*	*	-
Big Business (as employers re: benefits)	*	*	-
Small Business (as employers re: benefits)	*	*	-
Patients/Families	*	*	-
Consumer Groups	*	*	-
Underclass groups	*	*	-
Upper-class groups	*	*	1
The American Public	*	*	-
Bill Bradley	*	*	-
Al Gore (as candidate)	*	*	-
Joseph Lieberman (as candidate)	-	-	-
George W. Bush (as candidate)	*	*	-
Dick Cheney (as candidate)	-	-	-
John McCain (as candidate)	*	*	-
Presidential Candidate - other	-	-	-
Other	*	*	1
No HERO/HEROINE portrayed	91	91	89

Total %

Print %

Broadcast %

19. ISSUE DEBATE BALANCE LEVEL

Evaluates the extent to which a story is balanced when a policy issue debate is central to the piece, that is, presents at least some information on both sides of the policy debate. If the journalist made a clear indication as to what policy should be made, or if the number of positive and negative interpretations and innuendos made reached a ratio of 2:1, stories were coded as unbalanced. Stories were only coded as unfair if they gave absolutely no mention to the other side of the debate.

(Applicable N=1,252)

Balanced on the <i>Policy Issue Debate</i>	56	54	87
Out of balance on the <i>Policy Issue Debate</i>	44	46	13
Unfair on the <i>Policy Issue Debate</i>	-	-	-



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