



Talking to the media is important.

The public learns most everything they know about the health care reform debate through the media. Too often what they hear is misinformation and political rhetoric rather than fact. Proposals are discussed and debated, massive figures in the billions or even trillions are bandied about, but the average person never really understands how these proposals will impact them.

The media doesn't often hear directly from physicians on health care reform. You can help to educate the public by talking to the local media about the threats to the physician-patient relationship from a government-run health care system.

The public needs to know how you feel about health reform proposals. And they need to know the dangers of a government-run system. By talking to the media you can help them to understand what is at stake and how it could affect the public.

If you have questions or would like to know more contact the ASMD at (202) 449-8665.

Ways to talk to the media.

It's unlikely that you will be on CNN or in the New York Times; they have more than enough voices discussing health care reform. But there are probably not many strong voices on this issue in your community. You can serve the public by being a voice on the issue in your in your local paper and on your local news programs. Here are suggestions for speaking through the media:

- **Write letters to the editor.** Letters to the editor are the primary way the public can communicate through newspapers. They are usually in response to a particular news story or editorial, and are rarely longer than 150 words. Next time you read a story about health care reform, take a moment to write *your* opinion, as a physician, and send it in. It is very likely to be published.
- **Write op-eds.** Op-eds are longer opinion pieces in newspapers, usually between 600 and 1,000 words. They generally appear on the page facing the newspaper's own editorial comments (op-ed is short for "opposite the editorials"), and reflect the opinions of community leaders or organizations. If you can make a complete case against government-run health care, how it will affect your practice or medicine in general, consider writing an op-ed to express your views and educate the public.
- **Reach out directly to reporters.** Local reporters – in print, on TV, and on radio – will often appreciate speaking with a local source on important national issues like health reform. You can help them connect a large issue to the everyday people in their audiences. When you read, see or hear a story that you agree or disagree with, take a moment to contact the reporter to discuss your opinions, and offer yourself as a source for future stories on health reform.



ASMD

PROTECTING THE BOND BETWEEN DOCTORS AND PATIENTS

MEDIA OUTREACH GUIDE

Key Points for the media.

- **Health care decisions should be made by physicians, patients, and patients' families.** The bond between physicians and patients has been under attack for years. It is critical to the future of health care in America for doctors to fight any proposal that expands the involvement of government in decisions related to patients' care. The public needs to hear about these issues from physicians – the men and women on the front lines of health care.
- **Government controlled health care will be expensive and inefficient.** Government already dominates education, transportation, and much more. The U.S. government controls nearly half of all health care spending. Proposals to expand public health care programs would put the government in charge of a majority of the available health care dollars, and we'll all experience higher taxes and lower quality care. People need to understand how costly a government run plan will be – like Medicare and Amtrak.
- **Physicians will say "NO!" to government-run health care.** If proposals to give government more power to control the way health care is provided in America are enacted, then treatments, procedures, and prescriptions could be mandated not just by middle managers at insurance companies focused only on a balance sheet, but by *government bureaucrats* focused only on rules determined every year by other bureaucrats – *not by doctors*. This will seriously impact the quality of care people receive. Through the American Society of Medical Doctors, physicians across the country are vowing not to participate in such a plan.

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