

# Markle Survey on Health in a Networked Life 2010

January 2011

*The Markle Survey on Health in a Networked Life 2010 uniquely explores the attitudes of the US public and physicians at the outset of federal health IT stimulus and health care reform.*

*Two surveys were conducted August 10 through 26, 2010, by Knowledge Networks.*

## The Public and Doctors Overwhelmingly Agree on Health IT Priorities to Improve Patient Care

The Markle survey found that majorities of the US public and doctors share many of the same hopes for advancing health through information technology (IT). Responding to parallel surveys at a time when significant health care policy changes were being debated and implemented, the public and doctors overwhelmingly agree on key requirements for information technology to increase the quality, safety, and cost-efficiency of care, as well as core privacy protections.

As billions of dollars in new federal funds become available to encourage use of health IT, this survey indicates that the general public and physician populations share similar values on making sure the money will be well spent. These findings are a powerful indication that both groups want public investments in IT to come with accountability and privacy protections, and lead to improvements in health.

### Key Findings

- Many doctors and patients surveyed believe key information is lost in their health care conversations.
- A majority of the doctors surveyed indicate a preference for modern communications tools. Three in four doctors say they want to be able to share patient information with other professionals electronically. Roughly half prefer computer-based means to share information with their patients.

- A clear majority of the public and doctors agree that patients ought to be able to download their personal health information online and share information electronically with doctors.
- Roughly 80 percent majorities of both the public and doctors agree it is important to require participating hospitals and doctors to share information to better coordinate care, cut unnecessary costs, and reduce medical errors.
- Majorities of both groups also agree on the importance of measuring progress and setting goals for improving the nation's health in chronic problems such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and obesity.
- Roughly 4 in 5 of both groups express the importance of privacy protections as a requirement to ensure that public investment in health IT will be well spent.
- The public and doctors overwhelmingly support privacy-protective practices, such as letting people see who has accessed their records, notifying people affected by information breaches, and giving people mechanisms to exercise choice and request corrections.
- The public and doctors are largely unfamiliar with the details of the new health IT incentives, suggesting that education and outreach will be vital to the success of the program.

One in three of the doctors said they sometimes forget or lose track of potentially important things their patients tell them.

Fifteen percent of the public perceived that no one currently maintains the most accurate, complete version of their health records.

## Both Doctors and Patients Perceive Gaps in their Communications

Almost all (94 percent) of the doctors said their patients at least sometimes forget or lose track of potentially important things they are told. Less than 1 percent of the doctors said their patients never forget or lose track of key information.

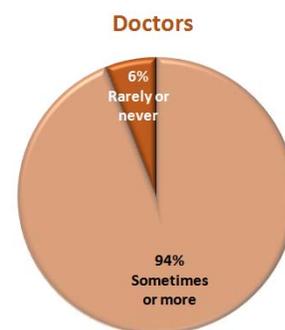
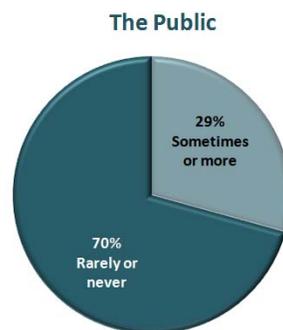
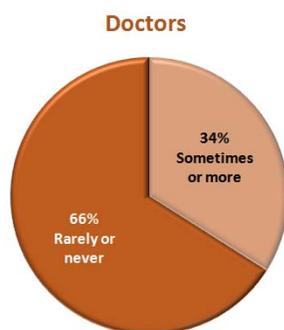
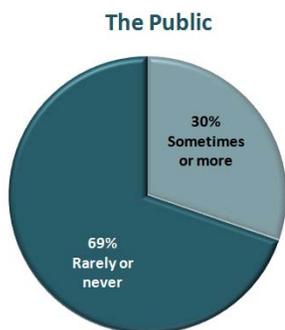
Patients gave themselves higher marks for remembering and keeping track of key information their doctors tell them; 28 percent said they never forget or lose track of important information from their doctor, and 42 percent said it happens only rarely. Still, 25 percent of patients said they sometimes forget or

lose track of potentially important things their doctors tell them, and 4 percent said that it happens most times or every time.

Patients gave doctors higher marks than doctors gave themselves for keeping track of important things that patients tell their doctors. At least 69 percent of the patients said their doctors never or rarely forget or lose track of key information. Still, 24 percent of patients said their doctors sometimes forget or lose track of potentially important things, and a handful (5 percent) said it happens most times or every time.

How often do doctors forget or lose track of potentially important things the patient says?

How often do patients forget or lose track of potentially important things the doctor says?



### Other Findings

- Up to 70 percent of the public said patients should get a written or online summary after each doctor visit, but only 36 percent of the doctors agreed.
- When asked who *should* perform the role of keeping a patient's most accurate, complete health and medical records, 48 percent of the public answered that it should be their "main doctor." When asked who they think currently performs this role for them, a majority of the public (59 percent) perceived that it is their main doctor.
- Similar proportions of the public (40 percent) and doctors (38 percent) said patients themselves should be the ones who maintain the most accurate, complete records about themselves.

## 3 in 4 Doctors Would Prefer Computerized Means to Share Patient Information with Each Other

*Nearly half would favor it, yet rarely do so today*

Roughly 2 in 3 (70 percent) of the public and a similar proportion (65 percent) of doctors agreed that patients should be able to download and keep copies of their personal health information. Roughly 20 percent of the public and doctors were undecided on the issue. Only 7 percent of the public and 15 percent of physicians disagreed with that statement. (See related brief: [The Public and Doctors Agree with 'Blue Button' Idea.](#))

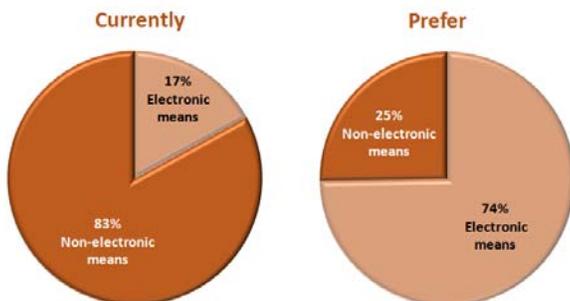
Similar proportions of the public (61 percent) and doctors (63 percent) said patients should be able to view their information at a secure Web site online.

Yet 41 percent of the public reported that they never ask their doctors for copies of their information, and 83 percent of the public said they never ask for their information in electronic format. The vast majority of the doctors said requests from patients for information in electronic format occurred either rarely (24 percent) or never (67 percent).

At least 74 percent of the doctors would prefer computer-based means (electronic networks, secure email, or portable storage devices) of sharing patient information with each other, although only 17 percent use such methods today as their predominant means of sharing patient information.

Fully 61 percent of doctors said that the fax machine is their predominant means to share information with other doctors, but only 17 percent called the fax their preferred option.

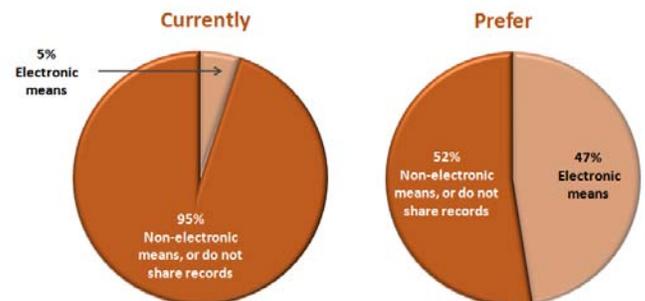
### How do doctors predominantly share patient records with other medical professionals?



Up to 74 percent of the doctors supported a statement that patients should be able to share information with their doctors electronically. At least 59 percent of the public agreed with this statement.

Although more than 4 in 5 doctors (84 percent) said that using paper copies and printouts is currently their predominant means of sharing information with patients, only about 2 in 5 (43 percent) actually prefer this approach.

### How do doctors predominantly share patient records with patients?

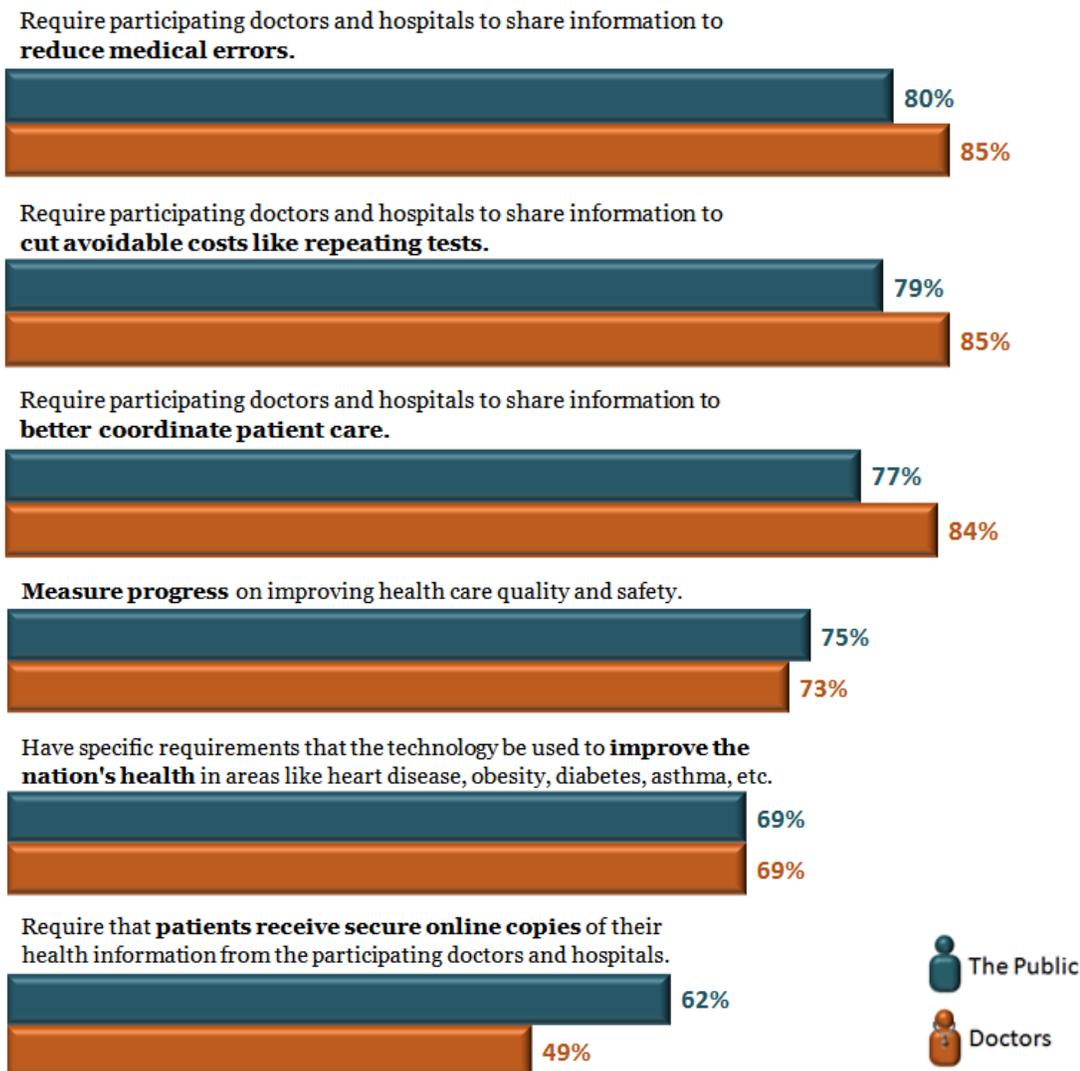


Only a small percentage (5 percent) of doctors in the survey used computer-based means as their predominant information channels with patients, although nearly half would prefer to do so, either through a secure Web site (22 percent), by email or secure messages (17 percent), or via computer storage devices such as Flash drives (9 percent).

# Roughly 80 Percent Support Requirements to Share Information

At the outset of a federal program to pay doctors and hospitals billions of dollars in incentives for using health information technology (health IT), results from the Markle Health in a Networked Life Survey 2010 indicate that large portions of the US public and doctors agree with the goal of adopting health IT tools so that they may share patient information more efficiently.

Percentage of the public and doctors who say these priorities are important to ensure health IT subsidies are well spent:

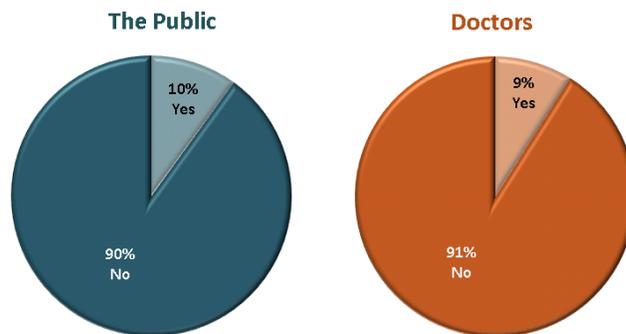


# PHR Use on the Rise

Markle has commissioned five nationwide surveys on consumer attitudes toward electronic personal health records (PHRs) between 2003 and 2008. The results have been consistent: Americans overwhelmingly believe that PHRs that include electronic copies of their health data and connections to health care providers can help patients improve their health, and they consider privacy safeguards to be of primary importance.

Our 2010 survey found that 10 percent of the public said they have some form of electronic PHR. Markle's 2008 survey, which used the same sample size and methodology, found that 3 percent of the US adult population had adopted electronic PHRs.

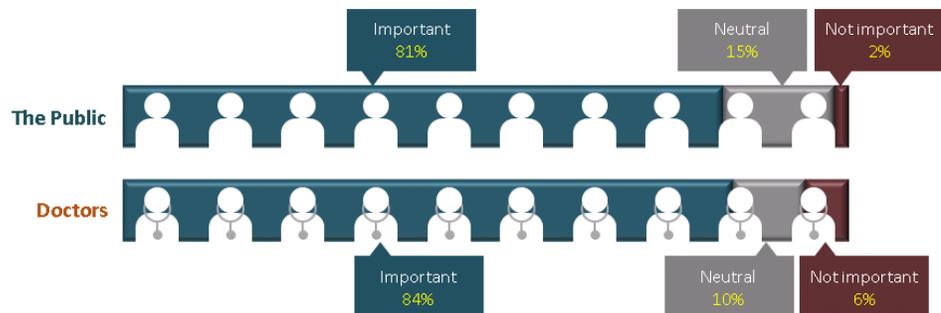
## Do you have a PHR? | Do you offer a PHR?



# Privacy Protections Are Important to the Public and Doctors Surveyed

When asked about requirements necessary to make sure that federal incentive money for health IT would be well spent, more than 80 percent of both the public and doctors surveyed say privacy safeguards were important.

## Requiring protections and safeguards for patient privacy is...



## The public and doctors agree the following policies are important:

A policy that individual patients be **notified** if their information falls into unauthorized hands in a way that could compromise their identity or expose their health information.



A policy that individual patients be able to **review who has had access** to their personal health information.



A policy that individual patients must have a **clear process to request corrections** or dispute the way their information is handled.



A policy that individual patients be able to **make informed choices** about how their information is collected, shared and used.



A policy that **government could not collect health information that is personally identifiable** for health IT or health care quality-improvement programs.



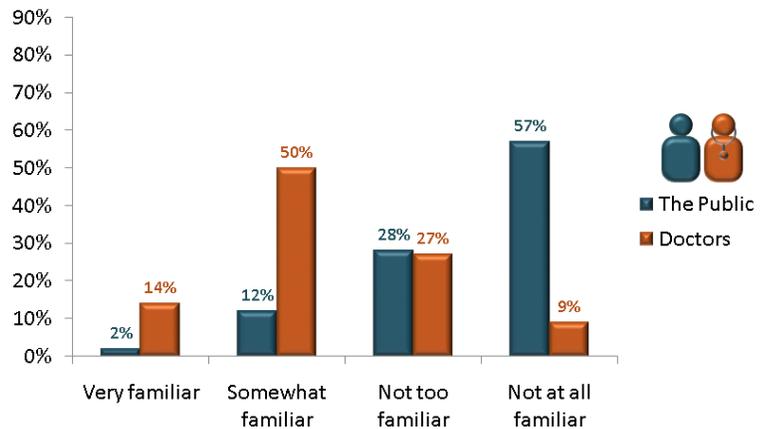
## Public and Doctors Support Public Interest Uses of Data If Identity Is Protected

Solid majorities of the public and doctors do not want the government collecting personally identifiable health information as part of the health IT incentives program. If there are safeguards to protect identity, however, at least 68 percent of the public and 75 percent of the doctors expressed willingness to allow composite information to be used to detect outbreaks, bio-terror attacks, and fraud, and to conduct research and quality and service improvement programs. The public's willingness to include de-identified information for public interest uses is remarkably consistent with Markle's 2006 survey.

# Public and Doctors Are Largely Unfamiliar with Details of New Health IT Incentives

At least 85 percent of the public and 36 percent of doctors described themselves as not very or not at all familiar with the health IT incentives program, which makes subsidies available for doctors and hospitals to increase use of information technology.

How familiar are you with this new health information technology incentives program for doctors and hospitals?



## Methodology

### General Population Sample

An initial sample of 2,493 people was drawn randomly from KN's KnowledgePanel, a probability-based web panel designed to be representative of the US non-institutionalized population age 18 and up, including both online and offline households (households are provided access to the Internet and hardware if needed). From the initial sample, 1,582 responded to this online survey—a completion rate of 63 percent. The survey was conducted August 10 through August 24, 2010.

### Physician Sample

An initial sample of 2,867 physicians was drawn from Knowledge Networks Physicians Consulting Network, an online opt-in convenience panel consisting of physician members invited to join from reputable listed samples, such as the AMA Masterfile and prescriber lists. From the initial sample, 779 physicians responded to this online survey—a completion rate of 27 percent. The physician survey was conducted August 10 through August 26, 2010. The panel generally reflects the US physician population on known demographics, although it somewhat under-represents younger physicians and hospital-based physicians. The study sample consisted of 26 percent primary care doctors (defined as internal medicine, general practice, or family practice) and 74 percent specialists.

The general population sample can be validly projected to the US population, with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.0$  percent. Although we believe the physician sample is a highly defensible reflection of US physicians because it was not drawn entirely at random, we are not as comfortable projecting its results to all US physicians. Because the sample is based on those who were invited to join from multiple sources without known probabilities of selection, estimates of theoretical sampling error cannot be calculated. ■

## About Markle

The Markle Foundation works to improve health and national security through the use of information and technology.

Markle collaborates with innovators and thought leaders from the public and private sectors whose expertise lies in the areas of information technology, privacy, civil liberties, health, and national security.

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