

MARKLE FOUNDATION

Attitudes of Americans Regarding Personal Health Records and Nationwide Electronic Health Information Exchange

*Key Findings from Two Surveys of Americans
Conducted by Public Opinion Strategies, Alexandria, VA*

October 2005

**THERE IS STRONG SUPPORT FOR CREATING A
NATIONWIDE HEALTH INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

1. **As described, more than seven out of 10 Americans support the creation of a nationwide health information exchange or network for doctors and patients.**

72% Favor

23% Oppose

Respondents were read the following information and asked whether they would favor or oppose the creation of this type of exchange or network.

“Now let’s imagine that a nationwide health information exchange or network were set up for doctors and patients. Access to the information would be controlled in secure online accounts. Only with the patient’s permission could their medical information be shared through this network. The patient would control what information from their medical records is made available to other physicians. In an emergency situation, a patient’s information could only be accessed with the permission of an authorized family member or representative. The medical information of a patient who participates in the nationwide information exchange would not be in one central database, but would continue to be held and maintained by their doctors or health care providers.”

Support for the creation of this type of network or exchange is strong and consistent regardless of political affiliation, age, education, or socio-economic status.

	<u>% Favor</u>		<u>% Favor</u>
<i>Party ID</i>		<i>Education</i>	
Republicans	72%	Less than College	74%
Democrats	71%	College or Higher	70%
Independents	76%		
<i>Age</i>		<i>Income</i>	
18-34	73%	Less than \$40k	73%
35-44	73%	\$40k-\$80k	73%
45-54	72%	More than \$80k	72%
55-64	68%		
65+	76%		

2. **Americans believe an electronic exchange of health information would enhance quality and increase efficiency of the health care system.**

Open-ended question:

...What are some of the reasons you support the creation of a nationwide health information exchange or network?

Respondents said they support it because they believe:

- It would bring efficiency and accessibility to the health care system, which they believe would ultimately lead to better quality care;
- Patients would receive faster and more accurate medical attention in emergencies, because physicians would be able to access a patient’s medical history at a moment’s notice;
- It would lower health care costs;
- It would enable patients to control who has access to their medical information;
- It would decrease medical errors in diagnosis and care.

3. **Attributes of a proposed nationwide health information exchange that focus on security and privacy are rated as the highest priorities among survey respondents. These same attributes are also rated as the top reasons for supporting the creation of an exchange or network.**

Respondents were read a series of statements describing different possible attributes of a nationwide health information exchange or network. Half of the respondents were asked (a) to rate the importance of each attribute, while the other half were asked (b) to say whether they would be more or less likely to support the creation of this type of network or exchange if it included each attribute. Results are below

ATTRIBUTE STATEMENTS	% Absolute or High Priority	% More Likely to Support if Included
The identity of anyone using the system would be carefully confirmed to prevent any unauthorized access or any cases of mistaken identity.	91%	80%
An individual would be able to review who has had access to their personal health information.	81%	75%
Only with an individual’s permission could his/her medical information be shared through this network.	79%	72%
Individuals would not be denied care or penalized financially based on whether they decide to provide certain medical information or choose to participate in a health information exchange network.	72%	70%
Employers would not have access to the secure health information exchange networks.	68%	72%
An individual's complete health and medical history would be accessible to that person over the Internet in a secure account.	53%	51%
Individuals control what information from their medical records is made available through the health information exchange network. For example, an individual with a history of mental health treatment could decide not to include information about treatment for that problem.	50%	48%
Independent bodies, accountable to the public, would govern health information exchange, and consumer representatives would participate as full voting members.	38%	48%

4. **A majority of Americans believe that doctors keeping electronic medical records of their patients would:**
 - Allow physicians to access medical information at a moment's notice (93% Agree);
 - Allow physicians to determine what treatments work best for different diseases (81% Agree);
 - Improve health care quality (80% Agree);
 - Be secure and private (66% Agree); and
 - Decrease health care costs (60% Agree).

5. **Six out of 10 Americans (60%) support the creation of a secure online "personal health record" service that would allow consumers to:**
 - Check and refill prescriptions;
 - Get results over the Internet;
 - Check for mistakes in your medical record; and
 - Conduct secure and private e-mail communication with your doctor or doctors.

6. **In addition to the majority of Americans saying they would support the creation of a secure online personal health record service, there is strong evidence that Americans would actually use this type of service.**
 - Nearly seven out of 10 consumers say they would use an online personal health record service to check for mistakes in their medical record (69%) as well as to check and refill prescriptions (68%); and
 - More than half report they would use an online personal health record service to conduct secure and private e-mail communication with their doctor or doctors (57%) and get results over the Internet (58%).
 - Only 19% of Americans say they would not use a personal health record service for any of the items.

METHODOLOGY:

Public Opinion Strategies conducted two national surveys on behalf of the Markle Foundation. The first survey was conducted September 20-22, 2005 among 800 adults. The second survey was conducted September 28-October 2, 2005, among 800 registered voters. The sample was drawn proportional to the adult population nationally. The margin of error for a sample of 800 is \pm 3.46%.