

Ways to improve quality in CT's health care system: Results of an on-line survey

A wealth of ideas to fix Connecticut's health care system have been proposed lately. Some address specific, narrow problems; others are more systemic and broad.

To help policymakers develop realistic solutions to improve the quality, effectiveness and affordability of health care in Connecticut, we collected 23 ideas from the "real world" experts - Connecticut consumers who struggle to access health care services. We surveyed members of our Consumer Health Action Network and supplemented that list with suggestions from seasoned health care advocates.

An on-line survey was conducted to test those ideas during November and December 2005. Visitors were asked to rate the ideas on a scale from 1 to 10, ten being high. The three favorites, tied with scores of 8.3, were quality control measures to reduce errors, expand the capacity of community health centers and school-based health centers, and promote aggressive hand washing in hospitals. The least favorite option with a score of 5.4 was to promote the introduction of retail clinics (walk-in health centers in chain pharmacies and retailers).

	1	10
1. Expand the capacity of community health centers and school-based health centers (8.33)		
2. Quality control measures to reduce errors (8.26)		
3. Promote aggressive hand washing in hospitals (8.25)		
4. Strengthen and enforce regulations governing managed care organizations (8.19)		
5. Increase transparency of costs to health care services and prescription drugs (8.13)		
6. Increase Medicaid reimbursement rates to reflect the full cost of providing care and eliminate cost shifting to employers (8.12)		
7. Chronic disease management for all (8.05)		
8. Use health information technology to improve the quality of health care and to reduce costs (8.05)		
9. Increase funding to address health care workforce shortages (7.95)		
10. Universal health care (7.94)		
11. Implement strategies to improve Medicaid systems to increase participation among providers (7.88)		
12. Expand HUSKY to adults without children (7.6)		

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13. Better transparency and reporting of adverse events in CT hospitals (7.57)		
14. Implement primary care case management as an alternative to HMOs for Medicaid (7.51)		
15. Increase cigarette taxes and earmark the money for health care (7.2)		
16. Allow children to stay on parents' insurance policies until they are 25 or 30 (7.2)		
17. Implement pay-for-performance for health plans serving Medicaid and SAGA clients to reduce the inappropriate use of emergency rooms, to reduce overcrowding, and to improve the continuity of care for patients (7.17)		
18. Increase health surveillance to measure and track current trends in health status (7.02)		
19. Establish standardized procedures for medical care (6.94)		
20. Eliminate trans fats from restaurants (6.92)		
21. Price controls on health care services, prescription drugs and other medical costs (6.64)		
22. Allow employers and insurance companies to give financial incentives to reward employees for healthy behaviors (6.37)		
23. Promote the introduction of retail clinics (walk-in health centers in chain pharmacies and retailers) (5.44)		

A few of the other ideas offered by respondents:

- Single payer health care
- Employer and individual mandates combined with a low cost, adequate plan
- Workforce measures to increase the number of primary care providers
- Be aggressive in promoting health literacy
- Limit rates charged to the uninsured
- Let small businesses access the state employee pool
- Increase HUSKY income limits
- Implement premium assistance
- Never implement premium assistance
- Make insurance cover all pre-existing conditions
- What a cool survey

Bottom Line:

There is no lack of ideas to improve Connecticut's health care system.

Notes: 122 web visitors responded to the survey. 95% live and work in Connecticut. Visitors identified their role in the health care system as consumers (27%), health care providers (24%), advocates (23%), researchers (8%), government (8%), employers (2%) and others (7%).