

Health Activists Use Social Media To Help Americans Understand President Obama's Health Care Plan

WEGO Health / Siegel+Gale survey finds dramatic differences in the understanding of basic points in plan between Health Activists and most Americans.

BOSTON & NEW YORK -- October 20, 2009 -- As the American people struggle to understand the points of President Obama's proposed health care plan, one group is well-positioned to help them: online Health Activists, *the most active users of social media*.

According to a recent survey commissioned by health consumer opinion leader network WEGO Health and global strategic branding firm Siegel+Gale, Health Activists are considerably more knowledgeable about the President's proposed health care plan than most Americans - who are significantly confused by the major points of the plan.

The online survey of 1,042 adults and 102 Health Activists, conducted the week between President Obama's health care address to Congress and his back-to-back appearances on the Sunday morning talk shows and David Letterman, finds **64.1% of Health Activists correctly stated the plan will limit/cap out-of-pocket medical expenses an individual can incur, versus only 42.3% of the general public**; and when asked if the **plan would ensure competition among health insurance companies, 63.1% of Health Activists correctly said yes, versus only 41.8%** of the general public.

"Sophisticated Health Activists are power users of online tools, and each Activist influences thousands of other through social media," noted Jack Barrette, CEO of WEGO Health, "**91% agreed that healthcare reform is a critical issue in the online world. But only 31% of Health Activists felt other people they knew online understand the President's plan.**"

"We need to help Americans understand critical issues about their health, and we use social media to reach as many as possible," said Janeen, a WEGO Health Activist who authors the blog Mom's Food Allergy Diner, uses Twitter often, and is a daily contributor to several online communities. "With all the political infighting and confusion in the media, it's up to us to figure out the details and translate them for our audiences."

Taking the nation's temperature

The WEGO Health / Siegel+Gale survey asked respondents whether they understood the proposal, and inquired about its details based on President Obama's speech.

The poll reveals that many aspects of the proposal -- particularly who will or won't be covered -- are widely misunderstood or not believed by the general public, but known to Health Activists. **Among Health Activists, 92.2% said that the President's plan**

would cover all US citizens, as opposed to only 69.2% of the general public. 72.8% of Health Activists correctly said the plan would not include those who are in the country illegally, as opposed to just over half (50.7%) of the general public.

The Bottom Line

“As all aspects of health care grow more complex, Health Activists are emerging as the new experts,” says Barrette, “they have combined real-life experience with online research and a mastery of social media to become consumer opinion leaders. President Obama would do well to get to know Health Activists as he works to explain his plan.”

Survey Methodology

The survey of Health Activists was taken by 102 member of Boston-based WEGO Health’s panel of health care experts, bloggers, and other activists. The maximum sampling error of this survey is +9.7 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

The general public survey was conducted by Siegel+Gale LLP, a strategic brand consulting firm in New York City. The survey was conducted on September 12-14, 2009 among 1,042 individuals 18+ years of age using Greenfield Online’s consumer panel. The maximum sampling error of the survey is +3.0 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence.

About WEGO Health

WEGO Health (www.wegohealth.com) is the first online home for consumer Health Activists, social media’s most active 10 percent, passionate about helping others lead healthier lives. Health Activists -- organizers, connectors, leaders and contributors -- meet at WEGO Health, then carry knowledge, content and relationships back to the health social web. In addition, WEGO Health’s Activist Social Network is the trusted community liaison to pharmaceutical and health marketers, who engage the Activist Social Network through innovative sponsorships, industry advisory panels, collaborative content development, widget distribution and more. Founded in 2007 and led by online health pioneers Jack Barrette and Bob Brooks, WEGO Health gives consumer health activists a voice to industry, and helps the world’s top health brands support, navigate, and participate in the evolving world of health social media.

For more information about the WEGO Health Activist audience and survey, please contact Gradon Tripp at gradont@wegohealth.com or 617-649-1507.

For more information about the Siegel+Gale survey, please contact Davia Temin or Trang Mar of Temin and Company at 212-588-8788 or news@teminandco.com.