

# Panel Seeks Citizen Input on Health Care Reform

BY NELLIE BRISTOL  
Contributing Writer

WASHINGTON — American health care could be in for the world's largest customer satisfaction survey as the U.S. Citizens' Health Care Working Group seeks comments nationwide on how to reform the system.

"In order to make health care work for all Americans, we need to hear from all Americans," said working group member

Rosario Perez, who is both a registered nurse and vice president of Mission Integration and Outreach Services for CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Health Care in San Antonio.

"We want to hear from individuals across the country. That means we want to hear your parents, your relatives, your coworkers, and people in your community," Perez spoke at a briefing sponsored by the Citizen's Health Care Working Group.

Established by the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act, the 14-member panel will collect as many comments and suggestions as possible before April 15. Submissions will serve as the basis for panel recommendations for Congress and President Bush to consider next spring. The recommendations will address costs, care affordability, and quality improvement.

"Despite increases in medical care spending that are greater than the rate of

inflation, population growth, and Gross Domestic Product growth, there has not been a commensurate improvement in our health status as a nation," according to the law that established the working group. Among areas of interest highlighted by the working group are consumer concerns about health care delivery, benefits that should be provided, how health care should be paid for, and acceptable trade-offs to ensure broad access to services.

The group is seeking comment through its Web site ([www.citizenshealthcare.gov](http://www.citizenshealthcare.gov)) and "town hall"-style community meetings planned for every state.

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) headed this bipartisan effort.

The press briefing was held in the same Senate room as the 1912 hearings on the sinking of the Titanic, and Sen. Wyden said the U.S. health care system could suffer a similar dire fate "if something dramatic isn't done to save it."

**Health in the U.S. has not improved commensurate with increases in medical care spending that exceed the rates of inflation, population, and GDP.**

Sen. Wyden suggested citizen input may engender systemic change that has stymied Congress for the last 6 decades. A "citizens' road map" for change could help "overcome the feeding frenzy by special interests," he argued.

The panel is made up of health care professionals, economists, benefits experts, and advocates from across the country, and includes Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt.

The group is chaired by Randall L. Johnson, head of corporate benefits for Motorola Inc.; vice chair is Catherine McLaughlin, Ph.D., a health economist at the University of Michigan.

To jump start the national discussion, the group developed a 30-page "Health Report to the American People," which summarizes the current state of U.S. health care.

"Having this information prepares us as a country to ask some tough questions about whether we are getting the services we need and want, [and] whether we are getting our money's worth and choices we need and are willing to make to have health [access] for all Americans," said Dr. McLaughlin.

She said that the working group aims to develop recommendations that would address health care as a whole.

"Our health care system is a lot like our natural environment, an ecosystem in which any significant change in one area has ripple effects throughout the others," she said. "We need to address the entire health care system, not just specific problems like cost, quality, or access—no matter how urgent they may seem from our different perspectives." ■

## FEATURING

- Medical and Cosmetic Dermatology Applications of Topical ALA/PDT
- State of the Art – Fillers and Live Video Demonstrations
- Medi Spa Workshop
- The Future Aesthetic Injectables
- State of the Art – Botulinum Toxin Type A, Fillers, Lasers and Combinations with Live Video Demonstrations
- New Formulations in Topical Rosacea Therapy
- Live Video Demonstrations - New Rejuvenation Lasers and Radiofrequency
- Emerging Insights and New Therapeutic Opportunities for the Treatment of Acne and Atopic Dermatitis
- State of the Art – Melanoma
- Open Forum with AAD President Elect, Stephen P. Stone, M.D.
- State of the Art – Medical: Granulomatous Diseases, CTCL, Precursor Diseases, Dx, Rx and Challenging Cases
- Hyperhidrosis Treatment Updates: A Focus on Clinical and Reimbursement Issues
- Dermoscopy Workshop
- The New Isotretinoin Registry - Fitting it into your Practice
- State of the Art - Psoriasis: Current Management and Problems with David Pariser, M.D.
- Clinical Updates in the Treatment of AD with TIMS
- State of the Art - Pediatric Dermatology
- State of the Art - Advances in Cosmetic Surgery
- Surgical Pearls

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