

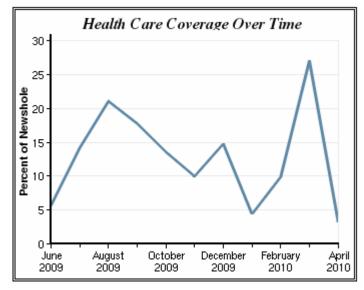
Six Things to Know About Health Care Coverage:

A Study of the Media and the Health Care Debate

It was a wild political donnybrook and the defining policy initiative of the Obama presidency to date. A Democratic chief executive was staking the crucial first year of his presidency on health care reform—a legislative achievement that had eluded several of his predecessors. And he was facing off against an equally determined opposition spearheaded by a new groundswell of fear about exploding government intervention.

There was a third major player in the health care debate as well. Much of the battle over health care reform, and much of what the public knew or thought about it, played out through a changing media system.

Prior to the legislative battle, curiously, health care had often flown below the news radar screen. Though the system affects virtually every American and represents about one-sixth of the U.S. economy, it accounted for less than 1% of the overall coverage in 2007 and 2008 according to data from the Pew



Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism.

It also amounted to the first long-running policy debate the press would have to cover in what was in some ways a new media era. It was one in which bloggers were being recognized at White House briefings, cable news and talk radio seemed to play an ever larger role in the media landscape and new technologies such as Twitter and social media had become important components of politics.

Add to the challenge, the health care industry itself, a particularly complex and often confusing topic. And the cacophony of charges and countercharges, commentary and criticism from advocates on both sides further complicated efforts to comprehend the issue. Indeed, as the coverage continued, the public seemed more confused.

A solid majority of Americans consistently said the health care debate was hard to understand—a number that increased from 63% in July 2009 to 69% in December 2009, according to surveys from the Pew Research Center for the People & Press.¹

So how did the press cover the most divisive issue of the past year and President Obama's top domestic priority? A comprehensive study of more than 5,500 health care stories in the mainstream media from June 2009 through March 2010 finds six basic facts worth understanding about how the media handled the debate. It may also offer some lessons for future coverage of other Beltway battles which are sure to follow.

First, health care coverage followed a roller coaster trajectory, spiking dramatically at times and plunging at other points. And the media platforms best suited for ideological debate proved to be especially interested in the subject—particularly the liberal talk media. In the war of words over health care, however, the opposition seems to have prevailed, as their terms and ideas showed up far more often than the key ideas of supporters of the Democrats' reform plans. The media also seemed to focus far more on the politics and the passions that drove the debate than the health care system it was trying to reform.

Finally, President Obama's presence as a key figure in health care coverage vacillated markedly over the 10 months studied, lending credence to the idea that he did, at times, lose control of the narrative.

I—Despite ebbs and flows in the coverage, health care was the No. 1 story in the mainstream media from June 2009 through March 2010.

In the 10-month period from June 2009 through March 2010, the health care debate was the leading subject in the mainstream news media, accounting for 14% of the overall coverage

studied by PEJ. That put it slightly ahead of coverage of the economy (12%) and well ahead of the third-biggest story, the war in Afghanistan (6%).

But the trajectory of health care coverage was uneven. It spiked in earnest in August 2009 (at 21% of the newshole), when the angry town hall protests generated major attention and remained high in early

Top News Stories				
June 1, 2009 - March 31, 2010				
Percent of newshole				
Health Care Debate 13.9%				
Economic Crisis 11.9				
Afghanistan	5.7			
Iran	3.0			
Obama Administration	2.6			

fall (at 18% in September). It slumped to 10% in November, when the Fort Hood shooting dominated the news for several weeks and early chances for passage of a health care bill seemed to be fading. And in January—when Republican Scott Brown's Massachusetts Senate race victory seemed to doom the legislation by denying Democrats a veto-proof majority—it accounted for only 4% of the overall newshole.

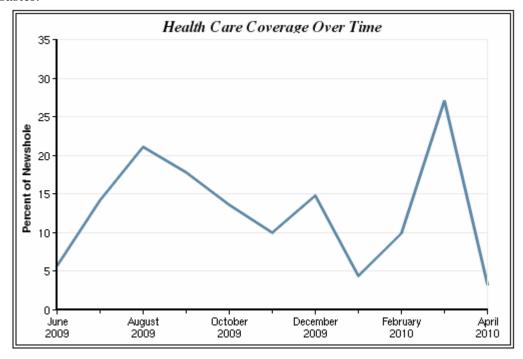
¹ <u>http://people-press.org/report/571/healthcare-obama-economy</u> <u>http://people-press.org/report/552/americans-following-health-care-and-economic-news</u> <u>http://people-press.org/report/541/</u> http://people-press.org/report/530/health-care-important-interesting-hard-to-follow

At that point, the conventional political wisdom held that there would be no health care legislation passed in the foreseeable future. And the media clearly appeared to move on from the issue.

In the last week in February, Barack Obama suddenly re-ignited the debate, first by unveiling his own health care plan and then three days later, by convening a televised bi-partisan summit meeting that generated little agreement but considerable attention.

Suddenly, health care was back in the news. From February 22-28, health care reform accounted for 24% of the newshole, jumping six-fold from the previous week. And in March, as the legislation moved toward passage after a polarizing, partisan and dramatic debate in Congress, health care filled 27% of the newshole, its highest point in any month.

Once the bill passed, even though the impact of the measure was still being hotly debated, coverage fell off dramatically—another indication of how subjects tend to peter out in the media once the Beltway battle has ended. In the month of April, for example, health care accounted for only 3% of the newshole, trailing such stories as the Iceland volcano and the West Virginia coal mine disaster.



II—To a great extent, the health care debate was a talk show story, getting the most attention from the ideological cable and radio hosts.

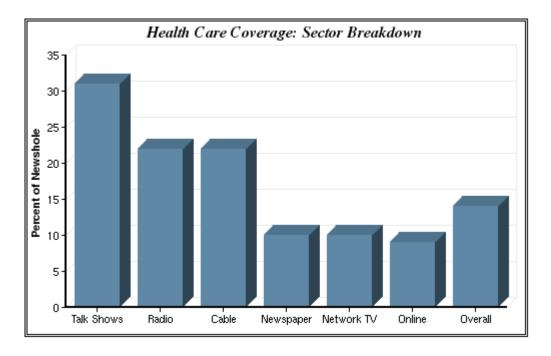
As an issue that featured the three p's—it was political, passionate and partisan—the health care debate seemed tailor-made for the cable and radio talk shows that thrive on argument and ideology. The numbers bear that out.

In the talk show sector, the subject was more than twice as big as it was in the media overall, filling 31% of the airtime from June 2009 through March 2010 versus 14% generally. On those shows, no other subject was deemed nearly as newsworthy. The No. 2 talk story in that time frame was the economy, all the way back at 7%.

The talkers' interest dwarfed the level of attention the health care debate generated in other media sectors. In the 10-month period studied, health care, for instance, accounted for 10% of the newshole in newspapers and on network news and 9% of the coverage in the online sector.

The talk hosts' attention to health care also stands in contrast to their interest in the other major domestic issue in the past year. A PEJ <u>study</u> examining how the recession was covered in Obama's first seven months in office found that the cable and radio talk hosts paid less attention to that story than newspapers, the nightly network newscasts and the online sector. That suggests that once the big political battle over the \$787 billion stimulus package was resolved, the economy story did not fit so neatly into the ideological debate template of these shows.

A month-by-month breakdown of health care coverage in the talk show sector reveals a major increase during the dog days of summer. In August, when the town hall protests exploded, 60% of all the talk show airtime was devoted to health care. (The second-biggest talk show topic, terrorism, was at 5% that month). In September, health care filled 39% of their airtime, and in October, it was still high at 30%.



In December, the month in which Senate Democrats passed a version of health care reform, health care had another big month in the talk shows, filling 35% of the airtime. And then in March 2010, when the climactic legislative showdown occurred, talk show coverage leaped to 55%, double the amount of attention the subject got in the media overall (27%).

III—In the talk show universe, health care was a much bigger topic for the liberal hosts than the conservative ones.

Many times, offense seems to work better than defense in the talk show universe, with opponents of an idea more vocal than supporters. But when it came to health care, liberal talk hosts—who broadly backed new legislation—devoted more time to the subject than conservatives who were resolutely opposed to it.

The left-leaning cable and radio talk hosts devoted 44% of their airtime to the health care issue, compared to 26% for the right-tilting hosts. And to some extent, the liberal hosts had two targets in their sights. While they spent much of their time criticizing Republicans for their opposition to the health care legislation, they were, at times, also quite critical of Democrats and the Obama White House for what they saw as an excessive willingness to compromise on issues such as the "public option."

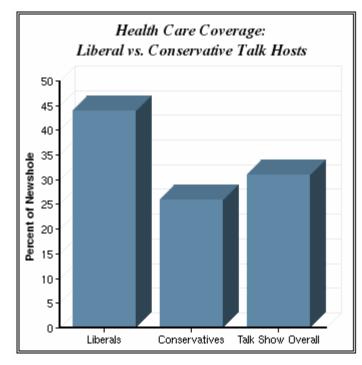
On his MSNBC "Countdown" show, Keith Olbermann took an unnamed White House source to task for claiming that liberals were making too big a deal out of the public option. Olbermann, who asserted there was broad support for including that element in the bill, scolded the administration, saying it was time "get your head out of the District [Washington D.C.] and back into the country."

On his radio program, liberal talker Ed Schultz accused the Democrats of not battling Republicans aggressively enough on the health care issue.

"They're a bunch of weenies," Schultz declared. "And the White House is, for some reason, afraid of its own shadow."

One other finding that reinforces the idea that liberal talkers devoted more time to the issue than their conservative colleagues is the breakdown of coverage by cable channel.

The Fox News Channel, with its prime time lineup of conservative hosts such as Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity, spent 20% of the airtime studied from June 2009 through March 2010 on the health care debate. But MSNBC—with an evening schedule that includes liberals Olbermann, Schultz and Rachel Maddow, spent nearly a third of its airtime in those 10 months (32%) on the issue.



CNN, with a more ideologically neutral lineup of prime time hosts, devoted the least amount of time, 13%, to the story.

IV –For much of the health care debate, opponents of the legislation did a better job than supporters of winning the message war.

Politics is often a war over vocabulary, and the media represent the playing field on which that war is at least partially, and perhaps still primarily, played.

In the crucial battle over the words and themes that can help define a policy debate, opponents of the health care bill seemed to enjoy considerably more success than the supporters, according to a PEJ Nexis search of these terms.

A study of the concepts and rhetoric that found their way into the media narrative from June 2009 through March 2010 revealed that the opponents' leading terms appeared almost twice as frequently (about 18,000 times) as the supporters' top terms (about 11,000 times.) Boiled down to its essence, the opponents' attack on big government resonated more in the media than the supporters' attack on greedy insurance firms.

In an attempt to quantify these message wars, PEJ examined the web sites of three organizations opposed to Democrats' reform plans and three that supported them. We identified the key concepts and themes espoused by these groups. We then searched for those terms in a Nexis database of about 60 news outlets across six different media sectors and analyzed the findings for the most popular ideas from each side. (See Methodology)

The three most resonant ideas opposing the Democrats' legislation were that it was the first step in a government run takeover of the health system; that it would lead to increased taxes; and the likelihood of rationed health care.

Of these three, the terms "government run" health care or a "government takeover" of health care or health care and "government bureaucrats" appeared most often, about 8,800 times in the

Greedy insurance industry

search results during the 10 months studied. Then came the phrases "tax increases" or "new taxes," which showed up about 6,700 times. Finally, the idea that health care would need to "rationed" appeared approximately 2,600 times.

Supporters of the legislation tried to stress three other ideas. Most notably, they wanted to portray a powerful and ruthless insurance industry. They also pitched the

Health Care Messages: Opponents vs. Supporters		
lune 1 2009 – March 31 2010		

Opponents TermsNumber of mentionsMore government involvement8,837More taxes with health care reform6,720Rationing health care2,624Supporters TermsSupporters TermsMore competition6,662Insuring pre-existing conditions3,662

Note: The concepts in this table represent a broader description of the actual terms used in the Nexis search. See the methodology for a detailed list.

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concept of increased competition under new legislation as well as new coverage of pre-existing conditions.

But the supporters of the health reform plans had considerably less success in the media conveying those ideas. A series of terms—including "insurance company abuses," "insurance lobbyists" and "unfair insurance industry practices"—showed up only about 560 times in the Nexis search.

A few supporters' phrases did register as a significant presence in the Nexis search. The word "competition" showed up almost 6,700 times and "pre-existing conditions" appeared about 3,700 times. But those phrases don't have the clear political clout of attacks on government health care or insurance company greed. It is also harder to know the context in which they appeared in the media coverage.

The Nexis search seems to reveal that it proved easier to create short and punchy descriptions conjuring up concerns about big government than about big insurance. And even after the President regained the initiative in early 2010 and helped steer the bill toward eventual passage, it was the opponents' rhetoric that was more prevalent in the coverage.

One example of this resonant rhetoric was the emergence of the term "death panels" in August 2009. That was the month when anger boiled over in the health care debate. The fiery town hall protests, featuring citizens yelling at politicians, proved irresistible to the press, and accounted for nearly one-quarter of all the health care coverage that month. And while some opponents of legislation had been talking about "government encouraged euthanasia" for some time, the idea seemed to crystallize in the press after the term "death panels" appeared in an August 7 posting on Facebook by former GOP vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin. In the posting, Palin alleged that government bureaucrats would sit on a "death panel" and decide whether citizens were productive enough to be "worthy of health care."

The Nexis search conducted by PEJ found about 2,500 references to "death panels" in media coverage, making it one of the opponents' more powerful semantic weapons. Virtually all of them appeared after Palin used the term in her posting.

V—The media told us plenty about the politics of the health care debate, but much less about the workings of the health care system.

The health care issue could be covered from various angles. There is the politics of the issue. There is the substance of the bill. There is the lobbying effort. There is the impact of the economic crisis on health care. And there is coverage of the health care system itself, what works and what doesn't, what needs to be fixed and what is all right.

While there was certainly a lot of coverage of the bill, the framing and mix of what got covered may have contributed to the public's confusion on the issue. While the largest component, by far, focused on politics, only a small fraction highlighted the issue at the core of the debate—how the U.S. health care industry actually functions.

Not surprisingly, given the highly polarizing and political battle over health care reform, the dominant thread of the coverage was the horserace aspect. Indeed 41% of all the coverage focused on the tactics and strategy used by both sides in the legislative fight.

Typical of the horserace coverage was an August USA Today story based on a Gallup poll finding that "Seniors are by far the most resistant to the idea of changing the current system—an opening for opponents who have focused on proposed cuts in Medicare spending and accusations about planning for 'end-of-life' care." And this quote from Democratic pundit Paul Begala on Anderson Cooper's CNN show: "Barack Obama ran for president believing in the myth of the reasonable, rational Republican. It's a lovely myth. And it's like, you know, the unicorn—or the Tooth Fairy, or a humble pundit."

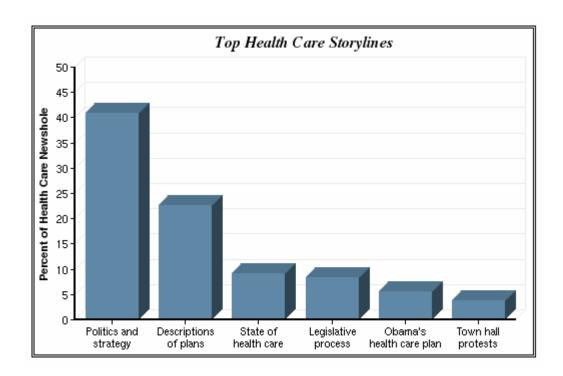
Another 8% of the health care coverage involved the nuts and bolts of the legislation process, essentially how the measure was wending its way through Capitol Hill.

Descriptions of the various plans and proposals for health care reform accounted for 23% of the coverage, the second-largest storyline. Some of those stories contained substantive analyses of the various legislative proposals. But many others, while outlining the elements of the proposals, also focused on the political calculus for passage.

In the 10 months from June 2009 through March 2010, only 9% percent of the overall health care coverage was devoted to the current state of an industry that consumes one-sixth of the U.S. gross domestic product and affects virtually every citizen.

The only sector to really devote significant coverage to the workings of our current health care system was newspapers, which devoted 18% of its front-page coverage to that theme. The top online news sites devoted, by contrast, 8% of their health care coverage to that angle, network news 8%, cable news 4% and radio 4%.

By way of comparison, the town hall protests, which essentially amounted to a one-month story, filled 4% of the overall health care newshole over the life of the legislative battle, though they accounted for 23% percent of the health care coverage when they occurred in August. In addition, three discrete and fleeting events—Obama's September 9 health care speech to Congress, Rep. Joe Wilson's "you lie" outburst during that speech, and the February 25 bipartisan summit— combined to account for another 4%. Taken together, the four-week town hall protests and the three other one-time events almost equaled the coverage of the health care system over the 10 months of the legislative debate.



VI—Before he re-emerged as the health care catalyst in 2010, Barack Obama had been a dramatically diminishing presence in the story.

No single person came close to generating health care-related coverage the way President Obama did. In the period from June 2009 through March 2010, he was a lead newsmaker in 22% of all the stories about health care. (To be a lead newsmaker, someone must be featured in at least 50% of a story.) His closest competitor, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, was way back, a lead newsmaker in just 2% of the stories.

But those numbers don't tell the whole story. A breakdown of lead newsmaker coverage reveals a fluctuating role for the President. He began by completely dominating coverage in the summer of 2009. But by the fall, he had largely slipped out of the headlines as key legislators figured more in the narrative. Once the calendar turned over to 2010, the President again emerged as the driving newsmaker in the story.

In June 2009, as Obama took to the road to begin aggressively selling health care reform, he was the lead newsmaker in 35% of the health care stories. That number remained almost the same—34%—in July as Obama held a crucial July 22 press conference on the subject.

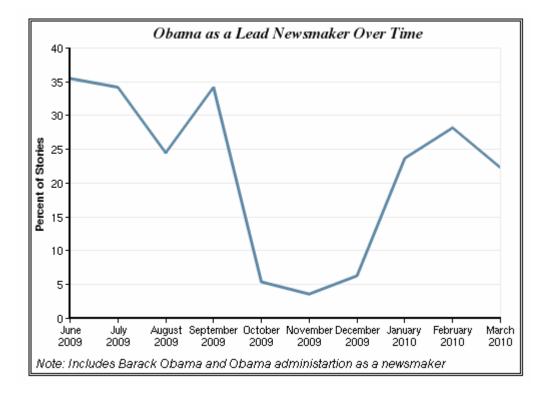
His coverage sagged a bit to 24% in August, a month in which the town hall face-offs accounted for more than one-fifth of the health care coverage. It moved back up to 34% in September, the month of Obama's big prime-time televised address. (The second-leading newsmaker that month, at 9%, was Obama heckler Joe Wilson.).

But by October, as the focus of the health care debate moved to Capitol Hill, the President's coverage plummeted. That month, he was essentially tied with Harry Reid as lead newsmaker at

5%. Close behind (4%) was Maine Republican Senator Olympia Snowe, a moderate who had voted for health care reform as a member of the Senate Finance Committee.

The next month, Reid edged the President although both were lead newsmakers in 4% of the stories. Former President Bill Clinton, who went to Capitol Hill, to give Senate Democrats a pep talk on the need to pass legislation, was right behind them, a lead newsmaker in 3% of the stories.

In December, a pivotal health care swing voter, independent Senator Joe Lieberman, generated almost as much attention (5%) as Obama (6%). Two Democratic senators who were also crucial players in the debate—Reid and Nebraska's Ben Nelson—each registered at 3%.



But in 2010, as Obama resuscitated a health care bill that seemed dead after Scott Brown's Senate victory, he once again became the focal point of the story. In January, he was a lead newsmaker in 24% of the health care stories, a number that increased to 28% in February and dipped modestly to 22% in March. Tellingly, in each of those three months no other public official was a lead newsmaker in more than 3% of the stories.

Obama's trajectory as a health care newsmaker reflected the political dynamic of the battle. In early summer, he emerged as the chief pitchman for the legislation. He receded from the narrative as the action moved to Capitol Hill and prospects for passage bogged down. In early 2010, when he reasserted himself, or at least the coverage suggested his larger presence, and he personally staked his reputation on it, legislation passed.

At times during the health care debate, some critics faulted Obama for not getting actively enough involved and ceding too much of the heavy lifting to Congress. An analysis of the media coverage at least suggests that the Democrats' legislation fared better when Obama actively carried the ball.

Conclusion

Last summer, as tempers flared in town halls throughout the country, CBS correspondent Wyatt Andrews described the environment as a "show of August heat." And in many ways, it was the heat of the health care battle that most interested and influenced the media.

Coverage peaked when the public got the most passionate and when the politics got the most partisan. The press focused far more on the horserace aspects of the legislative struggle than on examining the system it was designed to reform. No one lavished more attention on the subject than the talk show hosts, who spend much of their time engaging in ideological warfare. And the terms that resonated in the media narrative, perhaps most notably "death panels," were those that packed a polarizing punch.

All of which raises the question of the extent to which the media shed light versus heat when it came to health care reform. Certainly, many outlets did good work covering the numerous layers of the complex issue. But it's also true that the public seemed consistently confused by the health care debate and had a difficult time sorting out fact from fiction.

That was by no means entirely attributable to the media. But to the extent that the health care experience may shape the rest of the Obama presidency, it may also offer lessons for the journalists who cover it as they navigate in a changing media world.

About this Report:

A number of members of the PEJ staff assisted in the production of this report, "Six Things to Know About Health Care Coverage: A Study of the Media and the Health Care Debate."

The team that aided in the research, including coding and content analysis of the more than 5500 health care stories from June 2009 through March 2010, included: Banu Akdenizli, Josh Applebaum, Jeff Beattie, Kevin Caldwell, Erica Feldherr, Jesse Holcomb, Mahvish Shahid Khan, Danielle Kurtzleben, Vadim Nikitin, Kenny Olmstead, Dana Page, Aaron Ray, Angela Sanson, Laura Houston Santhanam, Tricia Sartor, Sovini Tan, Nancy Vogt.

Other staff members who made substantial contributions to the report were: Senior methodologist Hong Ji, content supervisor Paul Hitlin, associate director Mark Jurkowitz and director Tom Rosenstiel.

Methodology

As a special report for PEJ's weekly News Coverage Index (NCI), "Six Things To Know About Health Care Coverage" is based on aggregated data collected from June 1, 2009, through March 31, 2010. The complete methodology of the NCI is available here.

Examining the news agenda of approximately 50 different outlets (55 outlets in 2009, and 52 outlets in 2010) in five media sectors, including newspapers, online, network TV, cable TV, and radio, the NCI is designed to provide news consumers, journalists and researchers with hard data about what stories and topics the media are covering, the trajectories of major stories and differences among news platforms.

Following a rotation system, PEJ analyzes all stories with a national or international focus that appear as follows:

- On the front page of newspapers
- In the entirety of commercial network evening newscasts
- During the first 30 minutes of network morning news and all cable programs
- During a thirty minute segment (rotated daily) of the PBS evening news and NPR's Morning Edition or All Things Considered
- As one of the top 5 stories on each website at the time of capture
- During the first 30 minutes of radio talk shows
- During the entirety of radio news headline segments

Capture and Retrieval

All outlets included in the weekly index are captured and included in PEJ's media archive.

For newspapers that are available in print in the Washington, D.C. area, we have hard copies delivered to our office each day. For newspapers that are not available for delivery, digital

editions of the paper are retrieved either through the newspaper's own web site, or through the use of digital delivery services such as pressdisplay.com and newsstand.com. When necessary, the text of articles are supplemented by the archives available in the LexisNexis computer database.

Radio programs are captured through online streams of the shows. Using automated software, we record several local affiliates that air the program in various markets throughout the country. The purpose of this method is to ensure that we have a version of the program in case one of the streams is unavailable on a particular day, and so that we record the show in a manner that represents the way a typical listener would hear the program with commercials and newsbreaks.

Online websites are captured manually by a member of PEJ's staff. The capture time is rotated between 9 am ET and 4 pm ET. The home pages and pages with the top articles for all sites are saved so that when we reference the material, the format is the same as it appeared online at the time of capture.

Finally, all television shows are recorded digitally and archived for coding purposes. PEJ is a subscriber to DirectTV satellite service and all programs are burned onto DVDs for archival purposes.

All television and radio programs are then coded by a member of PEJ's staff who watches or listens to the archived version of the program

List of Outlets and Rotation Schedule

The most current list of outlets and rotation schedule is available here.

Story Selection

This report aggregates the NCI from June 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010. The data is primarily based on 5,557 health care stories during that time. Stories were considered to be about health care if 50% or more of the story was on that topic.

The Talk Show Sector

The talk show sector identified in this study includes both cable talk and radio talk shows. Cable talk shows include Lou Dobbs, CNN Prime Time, Hardball, Countdown with Keith Olbermann, Rachel Maddow, The Ed Show, O'Reilly Factor, and Hannity. Radio talk hosts include Rush Limbaugh, Ed Schultz, Randi Rhodes, Sean Hannity, Michael Salvage, Glenn Beck, and Thom Hartmann.

Among this group, Countdown with Keith Olbermann, Rachel Maddow, The Ed Show, Thom Hartmann, Ed Schultz, and Randi Rhodes are considered liberal talk shows, while O'Reilly Factor, Hannity, Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Michael Salvage are considered conservative talk shows.

Coding Team

The coding team responsible for performing the content analysis is made up of sixteen individuals. The daily coding operation is directed by a coding manager, a training coordinator, a methodologist, and a content supervisor. Several of the coders have been trained extensively since the summer of 2006 and most of the coders have more than a year's worth of coding experience.

Nexis search

PEJ examined the appearance of opponents' and supporters' key terms about health care in the mainstream media by searching these terms in the Nexis database. The time period examined was June 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010—a period of 10 months.

There were about 65 U.S. general news sources included in PEJ's Nexis search. The sources come from six media sectors, including newspapers, online, network, cable, radio and magazines. The list of sources is as follows:

- 1. Major US Newspapers (It is a Nexis combined source containing English language newspapers published in the U.S. that are listed in the top 50 circulation in Editor & Publisher Year Book.)
- 2. ABC News Transcripts
- 3. CBS News Transcripts
- 4. CNN
- 5. Fox News Network
- 6. MSNBC
- 7. National Public Radio (NPR)
- 8. NBC News
- 9. The Newshour with Jim Lehrer
- 10. The New Yorker
- 11. Newsweek
- 12. US News & World Report Publications
- 13. Washingtonpost.com
- 14. MSNBC.com
- 15. Salon.com
- 16. Slate Magazine

The key concepts and themes espoused by opponents and supporters was identified by examining the web sites of three organizations opposed to Democrats' reform plans—the Republican National Committee, Conservatives for Patients Rights and America's Health Care Insurance Plans. The three organizations that supported them were the Democratic National Committee, Health Care for America Now and Families USA.

The generated opponents' top concepts and themes include:

1. more taxes with health care reform

(search terms: taxes increases AND health care, new taxes AND health care)

2. rationing health care

(search terms: ration OR rationing OR rationed AND health care)

3. more government involvement

(search terms: government run AND health care, government takeover AND health care, government bureaucrats AND health care)

The supporters' concepts and themes include:

1. more competition

(search terms: competition AND health care)

2. insuring pre-existing conditions

(search terms: *pre-existing conditions AND health care*)

3. greedy insurance industry

A series of terms are used, including

- 1) if the insurance companies win, we lose
- 2) insurance companies AND record profits AND health care
- 3) insurance company abuses AND health care
- 4) insurance lobbyists AND health care
- 5) unfair insurance industry practices AND health care
- 6) (discriminatory premiums or high premiums) AND health care

Topline

Six Things to Know About Health Care Coverage:

A Study of the Media and the Health Care Debate Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism

Top Ten Big Stories in Media Overall (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

Rank	Story	% of Newshole
1	Health Care Debate	13.9%
2	Economy	11.9
3	Afghanistan	5.7
4	Iran	3.0
5	Obama Administration	2.6
6	U.S. Domestic Terrorism	2.6
7	Haiti Earthquake	2.1
8	Michael Jackson Dies	1.7
9	U.S. Auto Industry	1.4
10	Swine Flu Outbreak	1.4

Health Care Debate Coverage in Media Overall (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

Month	% of Newshole
June 2009	5.7%
July 2009	14.2
August 2009	21.1
September 2009	17.8
October 2009	13.6
November 2009	10.0
December 2009	14.8
January 2010	4.4
February 2010	9.9
March 2010	27.1

Health Care Coverage by Media Platform (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

Media Platform	% of Newshole		
Talk Shows	31.2%		
Radio	21.9		
Cable	21.5		
Newspapers	9.8		
Network	9.7		
Online	9.1		

Health Care Coverage on Talk Shows (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

Month	% of Newshole
June 2009	11.2%
July 2009	26.3
August 2009	59.8
September 2009	38.7
October 2009	29.9
November 2009	22.6
December 2009	34.9
January 2010	9.4
February 2010	21.9
March 2010	55.4

Health Care Coverage by Liberal v. Conservative Talk Hosts (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

Talk Show Hosts	% of Newshole
Conservative Talk Show Hosts	25.6%
Liberal Talk Show Hosts	44.0

Health Care Coverage by Cable Channel (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

Channel	% of Newshole
Fox News	19.9%
MSNBC	32.3
CNN	13.1

Health Care Storylines by Media Platform (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

% of Newshole							
Health Care	Overall	Newspapers	Online	Network	Cable	Radio	Talk
Storylines							Shows
Politics and	40.8%	35.7%	39.9%	39.8%	44.7%	46.7%	48.0%
Strategy							
Description of Plans	22.7	21.2	23.5	24.7	23.5	19.5	20.3
State of Health	9.1	18.3	7.7	7.6	4.1	4.3	3.7
Care/ Trends/Effect							
of Economic Crisis							
Legislative Process	8.3	6.2	13.9	6.3	8.1	4.4	6.4
Obama's Health	5.6	5.4	5.4	7.4	3.8	7.5	4.6
Care Plan							
Townhall Protests	3.7	2.3	1.4	3.5	5.6	7.3	7.3
Obama Speech to	2.2	1.8	2.5	4.0	1.6	0.7	1.3
Joint Session							
Obama Bipartisan	1.4	1.3	1.7	1.0	1.7	1.1	1.2
Summit							
Intimidation/Threats	1.0	0.5	0.6	0.9	2.1	0.3	1.5
toward Lawmakers							
Joe Wilson Stories	0.9	0	1.2	1.6	0.9	1.2	1.0
Ted Kennedy-	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.6	1.9	1.2
related Stories							
Other	4.0	6.8	1.8	3.0	3.3	5.2	3.7

Top Ten Lead Newsmakers in Health Care Debate (June 1, 2009-March 31, 2010)

Rank	Lead Newsmaker	# of Stories	% of Stories
1	Obama, Barack*	1199	21.6%
2	Reid, Harry	84	1.5
3	Pelosi, Nancy	70	1.3
4	Wilson, Joe	68	1.2
5	Lieberman, Joe	53	1.0
6	Baucus, Max	52	0.9
7	Kennedy, Ted	37	0.7
8	McCain, John	33	0.6
9	Dean, Howard	31	0.6
10	Gibbs, Robert	29	0.5

^{*}Includes Barack Obama and Obama Administration as a Newsmaker.