

27% of Doctors Say They Won't Practice Under Nat'l Medicine

The results of a survey taken by "Private Practice," a medical journal, and published in its March issue may contain some startling medical news. Asking its physician-readers their opinions on National Health Insurance, the magazine came up with some answers that may cause the Congressional proponents of NHI to have second thoughts about the wisdom of this controversial national program.

The survey showed that 197,480 doctors oppose National Health Insurance and that 57,820 doctors will refuse to practice under

nationalized medicine. It also shows that 20,237 doctors of all ages will retire rather than practice under NHI, and that 37,583 doctors will continue to care for non-NHI patients, or will give up medicine and seek some other kind of work, or will enter full-time medical work not involving responsibility for patient care.

The magazine took the survey because it doubted a poll made in fall, 1974 of New York City-area physicians by the Columbia University School of Public Health, which claimed that 56 percent of doctors support NHI.

According to Francis A.

Davis, MD, who wrote the article on results of the survey in the March "Private Practice": The results proved to us that physicians are worried about NHI, since 28,014 busy doctors took the time to fill out and return their questionnaires."

Dr. Davis said that the survey sponsors tabulated the first 26,434 answers—"far more doctors than have ever participated in a survey on this subject"—and because of the age, speciality, state and sex distribution of the doctors who responded, he believes these 26,434 to be an accurate sampling of the nation's 212,573 physicians.

While the famous national opinion polls extrapolate from a base of some 1,500 persons, "Private Practice" extrapolated from its own sample to obtain the total figures.

According to Dr. Davis, although there was some differences by age, speciality, geographical region, and sex, "we found great unanimity among physicians on these questions, despite what the Columbia and similar surveys have reported."

On the question: "Do you believe the Federal government should pay the medical bills for all your private patients whose care is not now defrayed by some governmental agency?" — the overall results were 7.1 percent yes, 92.9 percent no. In other words, Dr. Davis states, 197,480 doctors oppose NHI.

The highest percentage of "no" votes - 95 percent - was among physicians over 70, but doctors under 30 also said no by 83.2 percent to 16.8 percent. All other age groups said "no" by 83.2 to 16.8 percent.

And doctors in all areas of the country strongly oppose NHI, from a high of 96.7 percent in the East South Central states to a "low" of 84.3 percent in New England.

As in the Columbia survey,

Dr. Davis continued, we found general and family practitioners most adamantly against a federal takeover of medical care - 94 percent and 94.5 percent respectively. Psychiatrists were most in favor, but even 85.6 percent of the psychiatrists opposed NHI.

Although NHI has proven disastrous to the health and national budget of every country where it's been tried, our survey shows that the results in the United States could be infinitely worse, Dr. Davis says.

"Whenever an economic good is offered by the government at a price lower than the free market would set, demand skyrockets, making the good scarcer and the price higher. We have seen it work with Medicare and Medicaid, but NHI will be significantly worse," he said.

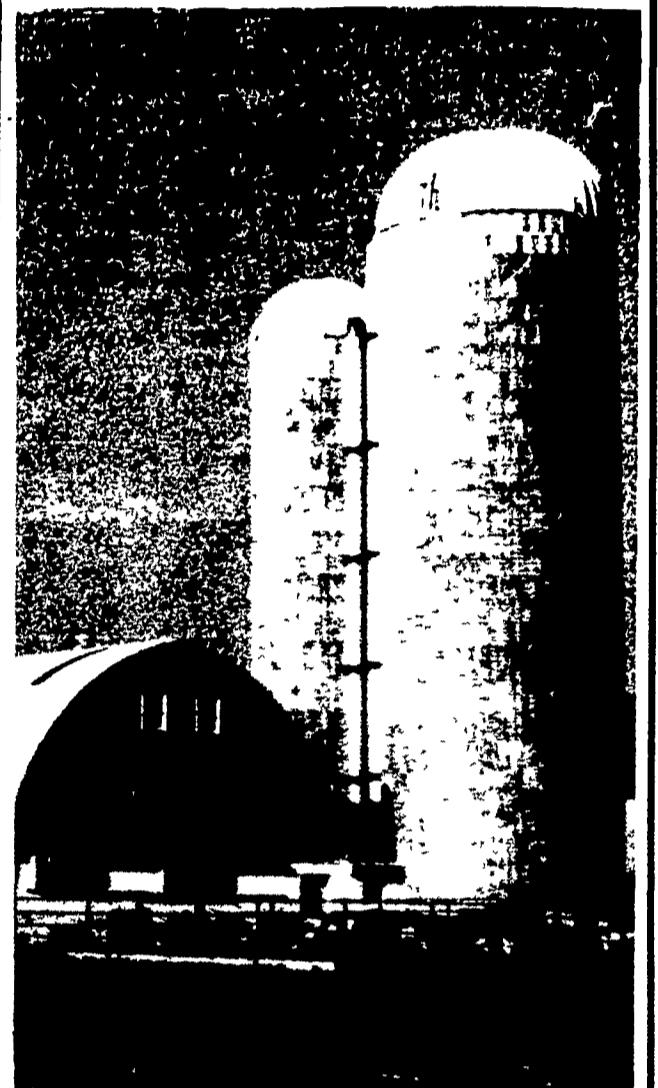
"Under present conditions, there are 212,573 private, office-based physicians to treat patients. Some say there is a doctor shortage. But if NHI is enacted the number of doctors treating patients will drop precipitously, putting a dangerous burden on the remaining physicians. Medical care will be much harder to get, and much more expensive, even though most of the additional costs will be financed through taxation rather than our-pocket fees," he said.

For proof of this apocalyptic statement he points to this question from the survey: "If Congress enacts a nationalized medical program, will you continue to practice under such a program?"

Although 72.8 percent said "yes," an astounding 27.2 percent said "no," Dr. Davis said. "In other words, if NHI is indeed an idea whose time has come, then 57,820 doctors will refuse to participate. Imagine what will happen to American medical care — hitherto the best in the world

to lose — the primary care physicians of which, says Congress, we already have too few."

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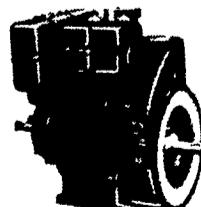
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