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Nation's Health Care System III, Survey Finds

(January 13, 2004) ATLANTA--The large majority of Americans say that the nation's health care system needs more than an annual checkup, according to a new survey released today by Community Voices: HealthCare for the Underserved.

More than eight out of ten Americans say that the nation's health care system is in failing health, describing the system as either in critical condition (30 percent), terminally ill (12 percent), or somewhat ill (40 percent). Only 15 percent of Americans rate the system in good health.

"The United States health care system needs a prescription for change," said Dr. David Satcher, Director of the National Center for Primary Care at the Morehouse School of Medicine and former U.S. Surgeon General. "As a nation, we need to commit to quality health care for all and for the elimination of disparities in health."

Eight out of ten Americans think that the system has gotten worse or stayed the same over the past four years. Of those, 27 percent say the system has gotten slightly worse, 20 percent say the system has gotten much worse and 35 percent say the system has stayed the same. Sixteen percent of Americans saw progress; 13 percent say the system was slightly improved and 4 percent say it greatly improved.

This year's survey shows a marked increase in the number of Americans who rank the health care system as in critical condition or terminally ill. A similar survey by Community Voices in 1999 showed 35 percent of Americans said the system was either in critical condition or terminally ill compared with 43 percent in this year's survey.

"The American people are dissatisfied with the gaps and inequities of the health care system," said Dr. Henrie Treadwell, Community Voices Program Director. "This survey highlights the serious concerns Americans have regarding health care."

Americans also want to see health care guaranteed. Seventy-seven percent say health care should be a right, with 48 percent strongly agreeing and 28 percent agreeing somewhat.

The telephone survey was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation from January 2 - 4, 2004 using random-digit-dialing among a national cross section of 1,021 adults. The survey's standard margin of error is plus or minus two percentage points.

Community Voices: HealthCare for the Underserved is a program of the [National Center for Primary Care at Morehouse School of Medicine](#) and funded by the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#).

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

Which of the following best describes the health care system in the U.S.?

15%	It is in good health
40%	It is in somewhat ill health
30%	It is in critical condition
12%	It is terminally ill
1%	Don't know/none of these

In your opinion, has access to health care in the U.S. greatly improved, slightly improved, has gotten slightly worse, has gotten much worse or has stayed about the same in the last four years?

- 4% Greatly improved
- 13% Slightly improved
- 27% Gotten slightly worse
- 20% Gotten much worse
- 35% Stayed about the same
- 2% Don't know

Do you agree or disagree with people who say access to health care should be a right?

- 48% Strongly agree
- 28% Somewhat agree
- 11% Somewhat disagree
- 10% Strongly disagree
- 2% Don't know

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