



# PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

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## Need for health literacy underscores importance of physician-patient relationship

(HARRISBURG, PA.) June 25 – As health care and insurance reform has driven the need for patients and consumers to have a greater understanding of their care, [Kaiser Health News reports](#) many are still struggling with issues and terminology they simply do not fully understand, if at all. The most recent data available from a U.S. Dept. of Education assessment shows [just 12 percent of U.S. residents have a proficient level of health literacy](#), underscoring the crucial importance of the physician-patient relationship – especially since most patients prefer and trust the care of a family physician.

Pennsylvania's family physicians maintain the commitment to help their patients navigate the complex world of health care, bolstered by the findings of an American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) study revealing nearly 72% of those surveyed during the enrollment period of ACA preferred physicians to non-physicians for their health care, and 90% would choose a physicians to lead their "ideal medical team" when given a choice.

The survey, conducted by global market research company Ipsos, also found 70% of patients said they were less likely to vote for a state representative who supported legislation that would restrict their ability to continue seeing their physician, while 72% were likely to vote for a representative who would protect their ability to continue to see their physicians.

In addition to the Dept. of Education study, [a study by the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics](#) determined just weeks before Affordable Care Act enrollment that more than 40 percent of Americans couldn't explain a deductible. As we near the second phase of open enrollment in the Affordable Care Act's Marketplace, the confusion so prevalent during the initial rollout of ACA will likely continue, and Pennsylvania's family physicians are eager to help patients cut through the bewilderment.

"We knew the health care law was going to challenge many patients, immersing them in the insurance and care delivery language we in the profession hear day-by-day," said Douglas Spotts, MD, President of the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians. "While national surveys show people are struggling, the Ipsos survey's finding of how patients value and trust their physicians is humbling to me and my colleagues, and we will continue to advocate on their behalf."

The Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians and its Foundation supports its members (including nearly 80 percent of Pennsylvania family physicians) through advocacy and education to ensure a patient-centered medical home for every Pennsylvanian. The Academy and its Foundation are the leading influential resource among family physicians and physicians in training in Pennsylvania; the primary voice on health care issues with state legislative and administrative branches of government, media and professional health organizations; and the leader on health care issues in the community.

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