



HEALTHWELL
FOUNDATION®

Media Contact: Maria-Christina Zajac
Beckerman Public Relations
One University Plaza, Suite 507
Hackensack, New Jersey 07601
mczajac@beckermanpr.com
tel: 201.465.8026
fax: 201.465.8040

News Release

HealthWell Foundation® Gathers Leading Health Care Stakeholders to Discuss Crisis of the Underinsured

“Health Care in America: What About the Underinsured?” Draws Attention to Americans Struggling to Afford Health Insurance Coverage

Gaithersburg, MD, and Washington, DC (September 29, 2009) – On Tuesday, September 22, 2009, [The HealthWell Foundation](#), one of America’s largest co-payment assistance organizations, hosted a panel discussion to help draw attention to the growing crisis of the underinsured and the related challenges of reducing financial barriers to care.

Held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, “Health Care in America: What About the Underinsured” featured a panel of highly-esteemed industry stakeholders, each representing a different perspective in the health care debate. Jonathan Cohn, Senior Editor of the New Republic and author of [Sick: The Untold Story of America's Health Care Crisis - and the People Who Pay the Price](#), moderated the discussion, which presented the views of a wide range of stakeholders, from business to labor and patient to provider.

“While I used to say you’re only one job loss away from financial ruin because of a medical catastrophe, now I say that you’re one job loss or one diagnosis away from financial ruin,” said Cohn. “And I think the good news is that this recognition has entered our policy debate.”

Panelists included Stephen Finan, Senior Director of Policy for the American Cancer Society’s Cancer Action Network; Lowell Schnipper, M.D., of Harvard Medical School and the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Massachusetts; David Hom, formerly of Pitney Bowes and now of Solucia Well; John McDonough, who is working with the Senate HELP Committee on health care reform issues; and HealthWell Foundation beneficiary Virginia Pivik, a breast cancer survivor who credits her recovery to the financial assistance she received from the HealthWell Foundation. Each emphasized the dire need for a reformed health care system that adequately addresses not only the 47 million uninsured Americans in our country, but also the estimated 25-70 million underinsured.

“Clearly, we are very concerned about the uninsured and the absolute necessity of providing access to them, but as we began to look at the landscape, we also saw that there was this growing problem of underinsurance,” said Stephen Finan. “We’ve made this a signature issue for us because we think it’s just an understated problem.”

David Knowlton, board member for the HealthWell Foundation, commented on the staggering numbers of working-class Americans who have been drastically affected by increasing health care

costs, saying: “The people that fall between the cracks are not faceless people living under a bridge in a cardboard box. The people falling through these cracks are people with jobs and health insurance. They are your neighbor, and my neighbor, and the guy down the street and his children. These are people that we know.”

A short video featuring highlights from the event can be found on the HealthWell Foundation’s website, www.healthwellfoundation.org. A monograph and transcript of the complete discussion will also be available on this site within the next few weeks.

“As one of the largest co-payment assistance foundations in the country, we have an obligation to continue spreading the word that any reform efforts must adequately address the needs of the underinsured in order for a plan to be truly effective,” said Stephen M. Weiner, President of the HealthWell Foundation. “Hosting events that bring together well respected experts to share ideas on better ways to address these needs is just one of the ways that we hope to continue delivering this message, and the outstanding turnout for our recent panel discussion indicates just how important this topic has become for many Americans.”

For more information about upcoming events and eligibility requirements, please visit www.healthwellfoundation.org.

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Since 2003, the HealthWell Foundation® has helped more than 60,000 patients with serious and chronic conditions meet their cost-sharing obligations for treatment. HealthWell is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit association that provides financial assistance to cover the cost of prescription drug coinsurance, co-payments and deductibles, health insurance premiums, and other selected out-of-pocket healthcare costs. The Foundation considers individual financial, medical and insurance situations when determining assistance eligibility. For more information, please visit www.healthwellfoundation.org.