



Summit On Health Care Concludes Real Reform Begins With Disease Prevention

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Linda Young - AHN Editor

St Louis, MO (AHN) - Participants at the second of four forums on health care being held across the country concluded that real health care reform must start with disease prevention and better health information technology.

Former Congressman Dick Gephardt co-hosted the second in the series of summit conversations on "American Health Care for the 21st Century," with a panel of health care experts addressing the nation's health care crisis in St. Louis, MO, earlier this week.

Members of the panel included physicians and other health care providers, representatives from business, labor, AARP and others.

They agreed that escalating health care costs had caused a broad interest in reforming the American health care system among business, labor, health providers and patient advocates.

One participant, Joseph Hunt, general president of the Iron Workers International Union, said that health care has been the No. 1 issue for his group for years.

"For the past ten years in our collective bargaining agreements. Dollars that could be going into the pockets of our members are diverted to paying for health care," Hunt was quoted as saying in a press release.

William Novelli, CEO of AARP, said that escalating health care costs are also hurting his members.

"They used to be anxious about health care. Now they're scared," he was quoted as saying in the press release.

Novelli added that reforming health care requires disease prevention. "Everything else is a patch," he said.

Dr. William Peck, founder of the Center for Health Policy at the University of Washington and co-host of the summit agreed.

"Prevention is where it starts," Peck was quoted as saying at the summit. "The earlier the better."

However, another participant said his employees often don't understand why the company is asking them to focus so much on wellness and why it is spending so many health care dollars on wellness plans.

Dr. Gloria Wilder, president and CEO of Core Health, said that communication was key in getting the kind of health outcomes that patients deserve. She pointed out the need for better health information technology so health care providers can communicate with each other and with patients.

The first summit was held in January at the University of Miami. Two more summits are scheduled; in April at the University of Wisconsin and in May at UCSF School of Medicine in San Francisco.

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