

**CoverThe**  **MAY 1-8**  
**UninsuredWeek 2005**  
**Let's Get America Covered**

**For Immediate Release**

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**CDC DATA SHOW THAT MILLIONS OF UNINSURED ADULTS FORGO  
NEEDED TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS**

*Poll: Americans Want Congress, President to Make Health Coverage a Priority*

*'Cover the Uninsured Week' Organizers in Arkansas Press for Action*

LITTLE ROCK, AR – As *Cover the Uninsured Week* is launched in Arkansas, a new analysis of government data shows that millions of uninsured adults in the U.S. suffer with chronic illness and have medical needs that are unmet. Nearly half (45 percent) of non-elderly uninsured adults report having one or more chronic health problems. More than 15 million uninsured adults in the U.S. have diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or another chronic condition. The analysis documents that millions of these chronically ill adults forgo needed medical care or prescriptions drugs due to cost, leaving them at serious risk for increased health problems.

“Uninsured Americans with Chronic Health Conditions: Key Findings from the National Health Interview Survey” was released today by Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to kick off *Cover the Uninsured Week*, the largest nonpartisan campaign in history to focus attention on the need to secure reliable, affordable health coverage for all Americans.

“Those who have chronic conditions are often the most vulnerable in our society,” said Kevin Ryan, JD, Associate Director at the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement and Assistant Professor at the UAMS College of Public Health. “This study shows that when they are also uninsured, they are at great risk for missing out on the care they need to manage their condition. We owe it to the millions of uninsured Americans and Arkansas residents to do everything we can to see that they get the care they need. That starts with reliable and affordable health care coverage.”

The study was released in Little Rock by a coalition of diverse community leaders at the kick-off event for *Cover the Uninsured Week*. Some of the most influential organizations in the country are cosponsoring the *Week*, May 1-8, 2005. The effort is co-chaired by Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter and supported by nine former U.S. Surgeons General and U.S. Secretaries of Health and Human Services.

“This report underscores the urgency of securing reliable, affordable health coverage for all Americans,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of RWJF. “Millions of uninsured adults live each day with serious chronic health conditions, such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and high cholesterol. They do not have health coverage, and they are not getting the care they need. This is why our nation’s leaders must make health coverage for all a top priority.”

In Arkansas, 465,000 people are uninsured. Nationally, more than 45 million Americans – one in every six people in the United States – do not have health care coverage of any kind.

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The report released today was prepared for RWJF by researchers at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and The Urban Institute. Additional findings include:

- **Almost half (49 percent) of uninsured adults with chronic conditions forgo needed medical care or prescription drugs due to cost.** Uninsured adults with chronic conditions were 4.5 times as likely as their insured counterparts to report an unmet need for medical care or prescription drugs.
- **Many uninsured adults with chronic illness do not have a usual source of health care.** Uninsured adults with chronic conditions were more than seven times as likely as insured adults with chronic conditions to lack a usual source of health care.
- **Uninsured adults with chronic conditions are less likely to visit a health professional than their insured counterparts.** More than one in four (27 percent) uninsured adults with chronic conditions reported no visits to a health professional in the past year, compared to about one in 14 (seven percent) insured adults.
- **Despite having fewer contacts with the health care system, uninsured adults with chronic conditions still face large out-of-pocket expenditures for their care.** More than one in five (21 percent) uninsured adults with a chronic condition report spending at least \$2,000 out of pocket on medical care in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The report uses data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics, and is derived from an analysis of the 2003 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), the most recent available. NHIS is a survey of the U.S. population looking at health status, access to care, use of health care services, and economic and social characteristics.

Also today, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation released results of a new national public opinion poll showing strong support for action on behalf of America's uninsured, and improving health coverage in general. Conducted by Public Opinion Strategies in Alexandria, Va., the poll found that nearly three out of four registered voters surveyed (73 percent) are concerned about losing their own health care coverage. Voters say that improving access to affordable health insurance and coverage should be a top-tier issue for President Bush and Congress. Respondents were asked, "In addition to concerns about terrorism, national security, and the situation in Iraq, which ONE of the following issues do you believe should be the next highest priority for Congress and the President?" The top issue for voters surveyed was Social Security/Medicare (27 percent), followed by 'access to affordable health insurance and coverage' (24 percent), and in third, 'jobs and the economy' (23 percent). The poll was conducted March 29-31, 2005, and has a margin of error of +/- 3.46 percent.

"The people of Arkansas want our leaders to improve access to affordable health coverage for all, but the issue is still not at the top of the political agenda" said Ryan. "The time for making health care coverage reliable and affordable for all is long overdue. Our leaders must find a way to reduce the vulnerability we all feel about our health care coverage, and ensure health coverage for every one in America."

During *Cover the Uninsured Week*, more than 1,000 events will take place nationwide including health fairs, small business seminars, on-campus discussions, and interfaith activities to raise awareness and call for reliable and affordable health care coverage for all Americans. On May 7, in Camden, the Ouachita County Family Fair will be held as part of the *Week*. Free health screenings and information on local health services will be available.

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*Cover the Uninsured Week* in Little Rock is being organized by a broad coalition of local organizations including Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Arkansas Center for Health Improvement and Community Health Centers of Arkansas. In addition to RWJF, *Cover the Uninsured Week* is being organized nationally by some of the most influential organizations in the United States including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO.

Last year, nearly 250 national organizations and more than 2,500 local organizations participated in the *Week's* events, which took place in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. To view the analysis on chronic conditions among uninsured adults, as well as new public opinion research – or to locate *Cover the Uninsured Week* activities – log on to [www.CoverTheUninsuredWeek.org](http://www.CoverTheUninsuredWeek.org).

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***Sample Statistics on Uninsured Adults who Report Select Chronic Conditions***

See more at [www.CovertheUninsuredWeek.org](http://www.CovertheUninsuredWeek.org)

**Diabetes**

- More than one in seven (15 percent) non-elderly adults in the U.S. who report having diabetes are uninsured. That means 1.2 million adults in America report having diabetes, but have no health coverage.
- Nearly one-third (32 percent) of uninsured adults with diabetes did not have a single source of management for their condition. More than three out of four uninsured adults who report having diabetes did not have a professional examine their feet, and three out of five (60 percent) did not have a dilated eye exam in the past year.

**Heart Disease**

- More than one in eight (13 percent) non-elderly adults in the U.S. who report having heart disease are uninsured. That means than 1.7 million adults in America report having heart disease, but have no coverage.
- One in four (25 percent) uninsured adults with heart disease reported no visits to health professionals in the past year, compared with more than one in 16 (six percent) insured adults with heart disease.

**Asthma**

- More than one in six (18 percent) non-elderly adults in the U.S. who report having asthma are uninsured. That means 2.0 million adults in America report having asthma, but have no health coverage.
- More than one in three (36 percent) uninsured adults with asthma lacked a usual source for health care; uninsured adults with asthma were seven times more likely than their insured counterparts to lack a usual source for care.

**Arthritis**

- Almost one in eight (12 percent) non-elderly adults in the U.S. who report having arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia are uninsured. That means 3.6 million adults in America report having arthritis, but have no health coverage.
- More than half (59 percent) of uninsured adults with arthritis have an unmet need for either medical care or prescription drugs. Uninsured adults with arthritis are 4.5 times as likely as insured adults with arthritis to have an unmet need for medical care or prescription drugs.

**High Cholesterol**

- More than one in 10 (11 percent) non-elderly adults in the U.S. who report having high cholesterol are uninsured. That means 3.3 million adults in America report having high cholesterol, but have no health coverage.
- Uninsured adults with high cholesterol face large out-of-pocket expenditures for their care. Despite having fewer contacts with the health care system, more than one in four (28 percent) uninsured adults with high cholesterol report out-of-pocket spending of at least \$2,000.

**Hypertension**

- One in seven (14 percent) non-elderly adults in the U.S. who report having hypertension are uninsured. That means that 4.0 million adults in America report having hypertension, but have no health coverage.
- Three in 10 (30 percent) uninsured adults with hypertension lack a usual source of health care, compared with just three in 100 (3 percent) of their insured counterparts who report hypertension.

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