

Candidates present policy proposals, not just sound bites

Presidential candidates are always eager to campaign in New Hampshire, the state with the first-in-the-nation primary—January 8, 2008, this quadrennium. Some are even eager to appear at a place where they aren't allowed to campaign—DHMC, the state's only academic medical center.

All of the major candidates were invited to present their views on health-care policy at forums called Health Policy Grand Rounds. Two Republicans—Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee—and two Democrats—Hillary Clinton and John Edwards—had appeared at press time.

Crowd: The first candidate to accept DHMC's invitation was former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney. In February 2007, he told the crowd of doctors, students, and hospital administrators that he believes the country will eventually adopt a system for mandatory health insurance similar to the one he signed into law in the Bay State in 2006.

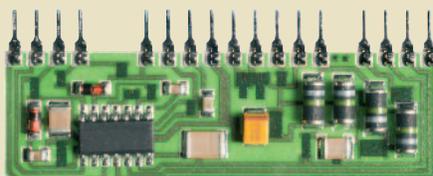
Romney supports a free-market system to spread out the risk for the insurance industry and give insurers an incentive to offer lower rates. He said a system that mandates insurance coverage will avoid the problem of people without insurance waiting until they have a medical crisis to get care, necessitating expensive hospital care and driving up costs for everyone else.

In August, New York Senator

FACTS & FIGURES

Chew on these bytes!

Health care today involves processing reams of data. Actually, make that *bytes* of data, *trillions* of bytes of data. Here are a few bits and . . . er, bytes . . . of insight into the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Information Systems (IS) universe.



6,000

Desktop and laptop computers supported

60

Terabytes of data stored (a terabyte being a trillion bytes)

20,000

Telephone and data jacks maintained

13,000

E-mail accounts maintained

4,000

Help desk calls handled monthly

8,000,000

Lines of medical dictation transcribed annually

1,000,000

Medical records stored

200

Staff members employed by Information Systems

5

Number of consecutive years (2002-2007) Dartmouth-Hitchcock has been recognized in *Hospitals and Health Networks* magazine's "Most Wired" Benchmarking Study

2.1%

Cost of IS at DHMC as a percentage of operating expenditures (compared to a median of 2.7% for all "Most Wired" respondents)

SOURCES: DARTMOUTH-HITCKOCK INFORMATION SYSTEMS, HOSPITALS AND HEALTH NETWORKS

Hillary Rodham Clinton outlined her plan. She wants to lower costs, improve quality, and see that all Americans are insured. Her presentation at DHMC focused on quality. She proposes to raise standards for providers, educate patients, and require insurers to reward innovation (she had high praise for DHMC's Center for Shared Decision Making). She would also overhaul the reimbursement system so it doesn't punish doctors for providing patient-centered care and would promote physician certification programs to keep doctors up-to-date.

And she would address the nursing shortage by providing \$300 million to expand enrollment in nursing schools, create mentoring programs for new nurses, and recruit more minorities into the profession.

Crisis: In November, Mike Huckabee and John Edwards presented their proposals. Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas, said the health-care industry and insurance companies need to place more emphasis on prevention. He said America is not facing a health-care crisis—citing DHMC as an example of some of the best health care available anywhere—but a *health* crisis, in which dealing with largely preventable chronic diseases, caused by lifestyle choices and a lack of preventive screening, is consuming as much as 80% of the country's health-care resources. He called the American health-care system "upside down," because it too often intervenes only after people have become catastrophically ill.