How Do Consumers Feel About Rising Health Care Costs?

The cost of health care has risen dramatically over the past several years. According to our recent survey, nearly 9 out of 10 people agree that these costs are too high. They are less certain, however, about the role that consumers can play in making health care more affordable. About half do not feel that they can personally affect health care prices, and half believe that consumers in general may be able to make a difference if they try. Only 14% agreed that these high prices are acceptable because the United States offers the best care worldwide.

While consumers recognize that health care is too expensive, they do not feel equipped to influence the cost. When asked about the stakeholders most at fault for the cost of care, one-third listed health insurance companies as their top choice. About 22% and 13% chose government and drug or medical device companies, respectively. Most consumers believe that the government and insurance companies can play a major role in lowering costs as well. Interestingly, only about 20% ranked themselves—patients and consumers—among the top stakeholder groups with the best chance of making care more affordable.

The fall 2013 Altarum Institute Survey of Consumer Health Care Opinions is the fifth in an ongoing series of semiannual surveys produced by Altarum’s Center for Consumer Choice in Health Care. The goal of the series is to document consumer opinions about their role in health care decisions and factors that may influence their preferences and actions. More about the survey and a full report can be found here.