

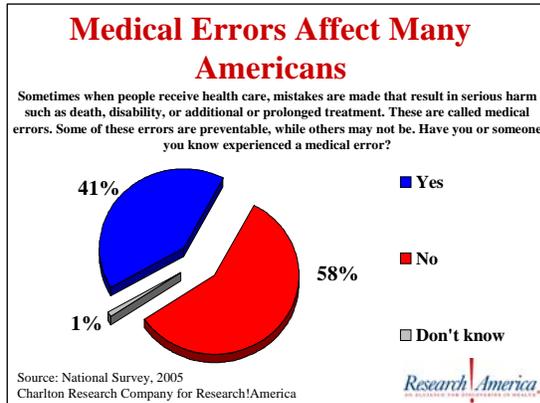
Reaching the "Tipping Point" for a Health IT Infrastructure

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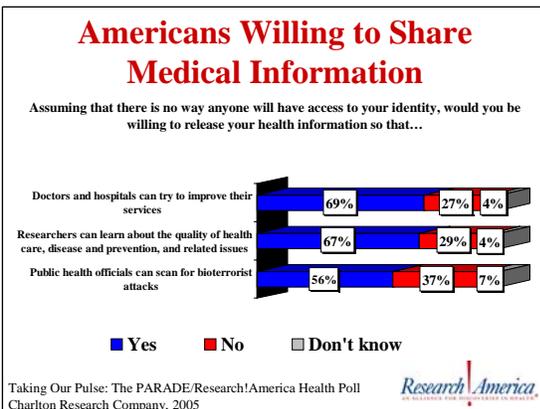


The momentum is palpable for putting in place a national health information technology infrastructure. Our work at Research!America helps demonstrate that the American public is well aware of, and deeply concerned about, the problems such a system would go a long way toward solving. For instance, large percentages of Americans say they or someone in their immediate family has experienced a medical error,

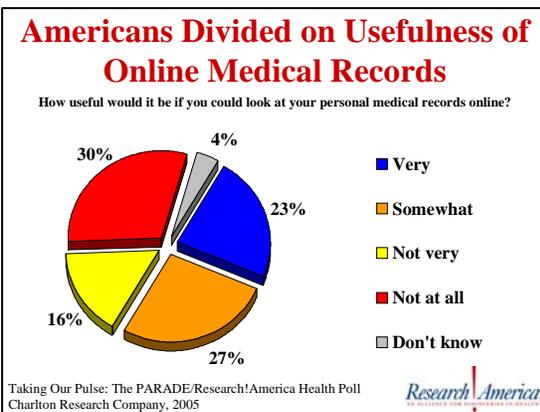
and 60% believe the U.S. no longer has the best health care system in the world. The public has "caught up" to expert opinion in terms of awareness of the problems we face.



Research!America polls show that majorities of the public are willing to share information on their health—and this is essential in order to make a national health IT infrastructure work. However, Americans are divided on the usefulness of personal online medical records. People have questions and concerns about the use of confidential information, including maintaining confidentiality itself, and these concerns must be addressed. Addressing such concerns should not, however, distract leaders from moving forward



to meet the public's expectations of putting research to work to assure better health. Our polls show that research—including what the experts call "health services research"—is a clear public priority and that the public is willing to pay for it via increased taxes. Research!America poll data published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Sept. 21, 2005) shows that two-thirds (67%) of Americans say they are willing to pay \$1 more per week in taxes for more medical research.



No one doubts that the time is at hand for action. In addition to both expert and public support, other components are now in place to enable aggressive advocacy for establishing a national health IT infrastructure—sooner rather than later. The nation is graying, and costs of health care threaten to loom out of control, compromising America's global economic competitiveness and jeopardizing gains in quality of life made possible by decades of medical and health research advances. The Administration has set a 10-year goal for putting electronic health records in place. Leaders from across political party lines and across a broadly representative group of experts in the field, as well as those who represent the public's interests, agree on the urgency of the situation.

We're so close to the tipping point. It's time to take the next steps forward. In the words of former Congressman John Edward Porter: "You can change the image of things to come. But you can't do it sitting on your hands."