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**For more information:**  
Christine Nielsen  
919-401-6599, ext. 25  
christine\_nielsen@nciom.org

**DESPITE A TOUGH ECONOMY, NOT ALL THE PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS IS BAD IN  
NORTH CAROLINA**

Morrisville, N.C.: The economic downturn has led to increased pressures on the North Carolina health care system and has caused considerable hardships for many in the state. However, many institutions are weathering the storm according to a collection of commentaries contained in the latest issue of the *North Carolina Medical Journal*, released today. The *Journal* poses the question – *Can We Be Healthy While Our Economy is Unhealthy?* The responses come from a variety of frontline perspectives across the state.

As expected, most of the effects are negative. A recent study estimated that North Carolina has experienced the largest percentage increase in the uninsured in the nation and it is therefore not surprising that many institutions providing care to the uninsured have seen marked increases in demand:

- The Chief Financial Officer of the University of North Carolina Health Care System describes a 30% increase in charity care
- Two safety net providers from Henderson County, NC report their utilization has increased by 14%, with waitlists of 90 days for dental services
- Care-seeking for one mental health provider has increased by 64%

However, some authors offer perspectives on other issues which present more encouraging news. For example:

- Physicians from Carolinas Medical System describe their program to provide free care to the uninsured and how this has helped stabilize emergency room use during the recession
- A group of researchers discuss the resilience of jobs in the health care sector and how they have been largely recession-proof
- An economist from UNC Greensboro describes his research on health behaviors during recessions and concludes that people make healthier decisions during tough economic times

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“These commentaries help us understand the wide-ranging effects that the recession has had on both individual’s health and the health care delivery system in North Carolina,” said Mark Holmes, PhD, guest editor of the issue. “Some of these issues have not received a lot of attention and it is important that state leaders understand how broad the effects are.”

Other commentaries focus on the federal stimulus incentives for doctors’ use of electronic health records as well as the recession’s effects on dental care, media coverage, and philanthropy. Also, William Roper, Chief Executive Officer of the University of North Carolina Health Care System offers his views on federal health care reform. All commentaries are available online at <http://www.ncmedicaljournal.com>

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**About the North Carolina Medical Journal**

The *North Carolina Medical Journal* is published bimonthly by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine and The Duke Endowment. The *Journal* reaches more than 30,000 readers, making it the most widely distributed North Carolina-based health-focused journal in the state. Each installment of the *Journal* features a policy forum devoted to interchange and debate about a single, highly salient health issue. The *Journal* also publishes original peer-reviewed studies from North Carolina researchers. The purpose of the *Journal* is to be a standard reference for policymakers and health care leaders who are engaged in the difficult task of addressing the health challenges facing our state. <http://www.ncmedicaljournal.com>