Objective: To assess patient opinion on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) in an Otolaryngology practice and the factors that influence those opinions.

Methods: An anonymous survey assessing patient opinion on the PPACA, demographic information, political affiliation, medical diagnosis, and insurance status was distributed to patients in three separate Otolaryngology clinics (General, Cancer, and Low-income/Indigent) from April to June 2014. A total of 300 surveys were distributed and 207 were used for final analysis. The primary study outcome measure was patient opinion of the PPACA and statistically significant variables affecting that opinion. The association of support for the PPACA and variables were tested using the Chi-square test.

Results: The only variables that showed a significant association with support for the PPACA were Political Party (p=0.0001) and Ethnicity (p=0.0050). Specifically, a higher proportion of Democrats support the PPACA than Republicans and a higher proportion of African Americans favor the PPACA over Whites and Native Americans.

Conclusion: Our survey of current Otolaryngology patients mirrors national findings of the division between Republicans and Democrats in their attitudes towards the Affordable Care Act. Political party appears to be the most significant factor in shaping patient opinion on this controversial subject regardless of insurance status or cancer diagnosis. Additionally a significantly higher proportion of African Americans and Hispanic/Latino support the PPACA than Whites and Native Americans.

The PPACA is controversial legislation and opinions are largely shaped on political and ideological grounds. Our survey of current Otolaryngology patients mirrors national findings of the sharp divide between Republicans and Democrats in their respective attitudes towards the PPACA and illustrates that insurance status or disease may play a less important role in shaping these beliefs. This is despite the purported benefits of the PPACA for low-income and cancer patients and may equally be a reflection of patient misperception regarding the PPACA, averaging only 74% in correct responses to a PPACA questionnaire. Otolaryngologists and physicians should be cognizant of patients’ beliefs and opinions and also be aware of the multiple factors that influence patient opinions regarding the PPACA, including increased costs, decreased access to care, and a negative impact on employment and employers.

It has been over five years since Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) on March 21, 2010. An ambitious overhaul of the U.S. healthcare system, the PPACA aims to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance, reduce rising healthcare costs, and improve healthcare safety and efficacy. However, since its inception, the PPACA has been a lightning rod of political controversy and partisan divide. Several articles have been published assessing healthcare professionals knowledge and opinion of the PPACA—including attending and resident physicians and medical students. It is, however, a paucity of literature addressing actual “patient” opinion on PPACA at the point of care. Therefore, in this study, we sought to obtain patient opinion on the PPACA in an Otolaryngology practice and whether demographic information, medical diagnosis, political affiliation, insurance status were significant in shaping their opinions. The authors hypothesized that political affiliation would have the strongest influence on PPACA support, regardless of a cancer diagnosis and insurance status

References