

[HOME](#)[DESIGN / GRAPHICS](#)[DIVERSITY](#)[ETHICS](#)[LEADERSHIP](#)[ONLINE](#)[PHOTOJOURNALISM](#)[WRITING / EDITING](#)[TV / RADIO](#)[ABOUT POYNTER](#)[SEMINARS](#)[FACULTY AND STAFF](#)[COLUMNS](#)[RESOURCE CENTER](#)[BOOKSTORE](#)

CALENDAR

Your guide to
Industry Events

MY POYNTER

CREATE A PERSONAL
PAGE ON POYNTER

- ADD YOUR BIO
- ADD YOUR PHOTO
- SHARE FAVORITE LINKS

SIGN UP FOR E-MAIL
NEWSLETTERS

GET POYNTER
DELIVERED
TO YOUR PDA



ASNE / POYNTER
ETHICS TOOL
DECISIONS ON DEADLINE

AL'S MORNING MEETING

Posted, Aug. 23, 2002
Updated, Aug. 23, 2002

Story ideas that you can localize and enterprise. Posted by 7:30 a.m. Mon-Fri.

[More Al's Morning Meeting](#)

[QuickLink: A5216](#)

Morning Meeting - Friday, August 23, 2002

By [Al Tompkins](#) ([more by author](#))

[E-mail this item](#)

[Print this Page](#)

[Add Your Comments on this Article](#)



Doctors Hire Image Consultants

[RedflagsWeekly](#), is a website that prides itself on debating and covering health and science issues *way beyond* what most media do. The site has a very interesting story this week about "image consultants" for doctors.

The story says, "Image is the most important factor for success in today's medical market," according to [MDTV Medical News Now Inc.](#), a New Jersey-based organization that presents a television medical news program that airs on cable in about 20 states. Their purpose is to "educate the public on today's most popular surgical procedures and highlight the area's finest surgeons."

Redflagsweekly says, "Another company that focuses on boosting medical business is [KMR Communications Inc.](#), whose mission is to represent "those who wish to increase their name recognition in target markets through the use of exposure in the media using the ever increasing vast network of television, radio, newspapers, internet and magazines."

[Katherine Rothman](#), CEO of the company writes candidly: "In dermatology, plastic surgery, ophthalmology, and now even holistic medicine, there are physicians whose names have become synonymous with a particular sub-specialty. Have these doctors re-invented the wheel or discovered the fountain of youth to warrant such acclaim? The answer is usually no. Most have simply hired a skilled pr firm with solid media connections."

The site found one doctor who says 40% of his business comes from PR.

Medical Costs up 13% This Year

Is there a connection between the first two Morning Meeting stories today?

[USAToday reported](#), "Insurers blame rising drug costs. Drug companies blame HMOs and hospitals. Doctors blame lawyers. And, it seems, everyone blames consumers.

The problem? Health care costs are continuing their rapid rise — averaging 13% this year and expected to be more than that next year.

"Everyone is a villain," says Drew Altman of the [Kaiser Family](#)

- [Search Poynter](#)
- [Search 231](#)
- [Journalism Sites](#)

REGISTER & SIGN
UP FOR E-MAIL
NEWSLETTERS

UPCOMING DEADLINES

Collaboration Conference:
Storytelling Partnerships
September 21-24, 2003
Apply by July 28
([details](#))

TODAY'S CENTERPIECE

Circulation Calls



The Color Connection

NEW ON POYNTER

[Workplace Violence](#)
Al's Wednesday Meeting

[Finding John Doe](#)
Sree's Web Tip.

[It's All Academic](#)
Convergence Chaser.

[Writing's Golden Hour](#)
Chip on Your Shoulder.

[A Moot Point](#)
Ask Dr. Ink.

[Value of Independence](#)
Talk About Ethics.

[Circulation Trends](#)
Journalism Junction.

[Center of Impact](#)
Design Desk.

[Classics & the Masses](#)
Book Babes.

[Culture & Trust](#)
Leading Lines.

Related:

- [Al's Iraq Resources](#)
- [Al's Iraq Meeting](#)

[Foundation](#), a research group. "Everyone is blaming everyone else because they're trying to shift the cross hairs onto someone else."

Patients and employers should not expect relief from rising costs anytime soon. The blame game is heating up because no one really has an answer on how to slow the increases.

"We should get used to the idea of double-digit health insurance increases for the next 10 years," says Uwe Reinhardt, an economist at Princeton. "I see no relief coming."

The costs of medical care are killing state budgets. Drugs costs and higher enrollments are big reasons.

Here is a [state by state survey](#) of what state governments are planning to control Medicaid costs.

A couple of the charts in the survey surprised me. 51% of all Medicaid recipients are children. In fact 1/5 children in the country are covered by Medicaid. 1/3rd of all births are covered by the plan, and Medicaid pays for half of all nursing home care.

Health Care Costs Hit Jails-Jail spends more on medication than food

Morning Meeting reader Ben McLaughlin, city editor, Springfield (OH) News-Sun dropped a note to say, "The high cost of health care has hit in an unexpected place for us, the county jail."

[The paper reported](#), "Clark County taxpayers spent more money medicating jail inmates last month than feeding them."

Prescription drugs for residents of the Clark County Jail cost \$21,028 in July, about \$1,500 more than food costs, according to a sheriff's department expense report.

"That's a first," said Monika Weicht, budget director for the department.

All told, the county spent \$49,398 on drugs, medical treatments and other health care services for inmates last month, which was about 20 percent of the \$248,267 spent on all inmate-related services.

"That's the highest our medical bills have ever been in the history of the Clark County Jail," Weicht said.

The paper says the county has no choice but to treat the inmates or risk a lawsuit.

"Inmates require more treatment for certain ailments now than in the past, Weicht said.

"We have had a marked increase of inmates on psych meds. These are very expensive, too," Weicht said.

Diabetes among inmates also has increased, she said.

Kelly estimated about 60 inmates per day take prescription medication.

Weicht said that once an inmate is booked into the jail – whether it's for a day or three months – the county is responsible for his or her health care, unless the inmate has medicaid or insurance, which most don't.

The jail is required by law to provide a minimum standard of medical care, treating everything from minor cuts to kidney dialysis to AIDS, Kelly said.

Journalists and Numbers-Covering the Baseball Contract Story

Peter McKay at the Wall Street Journal passed along a great note to Morning Meeting readers. Peter noticed a well written piece in The Washington Post, by Dave Sheinin. Sheinin was writing about how a [baseball strike](#) would hurt some players more than others, based on the wide disparity between the lowest and highest individual salaries. McKay said he thought this passage was particularly deft:

"The average salary this season was \$2.38 million, up 5.2 percent from a year ago. At the same time, however, the median salary -- the point at which half of the players are above, and half are below -- dropped from \$975,000 in 2001 to \$900,000 this year, an indication that, while the richest players are getting richer, the poorest ones are not."

McKay said in his note to Morning Meeting, "An unscientific poll of several fans I know found that median number simply eye-popping, just because they were surprised to learn that ANY measure of baseball salaries is DECLINING. It seems the average of almost \$2.4 million has been much more widely reported, and plays very well to the stereotype of the spoiled athlete always getting his way.

My guess is that the median has gotten less attention for a few reasons. For one, the lower-paid players probably aren't complaining too loudly, since they're still doing well financially compared to most Americans, and they're probably glad just to have made it to their sport's major leagues against astronomical competitive odds.

But it's also probably true that too few reporters understand the difference between [average and median](#), and the value of what each can illustrate. As Sheinin's story demonstrates very well, the median is handy for just these sorts of situations, when we're comparing a set of widely varying numbers in which the highest and lowest individual entries can skew the average

dramatically. There are implications here for a lot of stories we do that involve numbers, including everything from crime stats to the business page."

Nice note Peter-Here are a few resources that will help journalists with math:

[-Math for Journalists](#)

[-Bob Baker's Newsthinking](#)-math for journalists

[-Help with percentages calculator](#)

[-Cost of living calculator](#)-will help you translate, say, 1980 dollars to 2002 dollars adjusted for inflation.

[-A fun math test for journalists-instant results](#) shop this around your newsroom and become "very afraid."

[-A slightly less fun math test for journalists](#)

[-A quick summary of the major issues in the contract dispute](#)

Prez and "Running With Intensity"

Aides say that the war on terrorism has increased President Bush's devotion to a rigorous workout regimen. That dedication has put the president's cardiovascular system in the top 1 percent of men his age, 56. In an interview with [Runner's World](#), released Thursday, Bush said he has been 'running with a little more intensity' since Sept. 11.

"It's interesting that my times have become faster right after the war began,' Bush told the magazine. 'I guess that's part of the stress relief I get from it. For me, the psychological benefit is enormous."

This is an interesting topic-how have people changed their attention to issues of health, fitness and well-being? Will the President's example be meaningful to how we all live?

[E-mail this item](#)

[Print this Page](#)

[Add Your Comments on this Article](#)

[Back to Top](#)

[More AI's Morning Meeting](#)

[Site Map](#) | [Search Poynter](#) | [Contact Poynter](#)

Copyright © 1995-2003 The Poynter Institute

801 Third Street South | St. Petersburg, FL 33701 | Phone (888) 769-6837

Site developed & hosted by [DataGlyphics, Inc.](#)

QuickLink 

 DG.Its
PUBLISHER