Most New Jersey citizens feel that hospital costs are too high, but that the care they receive is good or excellent. Most citizens also believe that state government should regulate hospital charges. These are some of the important findings of the Eagleton Institute's latest New Jersey Poll.

The poll contacted a statewide random sample of 1214 persons 18 years of age and over by telephone from May 11 to 22. People were asked whether they or anyone in their family had been hospitalized in the last five years. The 57% of the persons who answered "yes" were then asked about the quality and cost of hospital care.

Among those respondents, 42% believed that "excellent care" had been given. Another 40% rated the hospital care they or members of their family had received as "good." 9% rated hospital care as "fair," while 7% rated it as "poor," and 2% reported no opinion.

New Jersey citizens were much more critical of the level of hospital costs, however. Persons were asked to rate hospital costs in view of the care they or a member of their family had received. A majority of the respondents--53%--believed that hospital costs were "much too high."

Another 30% of those persons who had either received hospital care in the last five years or had a member of the family receive such care, believed that hospital costs were "somewhat too high." Only 17% believed that hospital costs were "about right" or "somewhat too low," given the care they received.

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Among all 1214 respondents, a total of 68% believed it would be a good idea for state government to regulate hospital charges. Another 17% did not believe that state government should regulate hospital charges, while 9% were not sure and 6% reported no opinion.

There were no striking differences in the rating of hospital care by persons of differing party affiliation, age, sex, education, income, occupation or ethnicity. However, there were some differences in how a few groups rated hospital costs. Republicans and white collar wage earners tended to feel that hospital costs were somewhat more in line with the care they received than did Democrats and skilled laborers.

In addition, wage earners employed in unskilled, skilled or sales occupations tended to be more supportive of state regulation of hospital charges than did white collar workers. However, a majority of respondents in all groups favored state regulation of hospital charges.

The results of the New Jersey Poll were tabulated by the Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, New Jersey.

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TO:                     POLITICAL REPORTERS
FROM:                   JOHN C. BLYDENBURGH
RE:                     THE NEW JERSEY POLL, RELEASE #7, MONDAY MORNING, JUNE 18, 1973

The questions on which this analysis is based are as follows:

"Has it been necessary for you, or anyone in your family, to be hospitalized in the last 5 years?"

"How would you rate the care you received by yourself or another member of your family while in the hospital?"

"Given the care you or a member of your family received while in the hospital, do you think the hospital costs were much too high, somewhat too high, about right, somewhat too low, much too low?"

The state government currently regulates the telephone company, gas, water and electric companies. Do you think it would be a good idea for state government to regulate hospital charges?

At the present time, hospital charges are being temporarily regulated by the Cost of Living Council, under Phase III of the President's Economic Stabilization Program. The health industry is the only industry in the country currently singled out for continuation of mandatory wage-price controls in Phase III.

The states of Connecticut, Washington, and Maryland have recently passed laws to regulate hospital rates, and similar laws are being considered in Pennsylvania and California.

Similar proposals for regulation of hospitals have been made in New Jersey to the Commissioner of Insurance on two separate occasions by attorneys representing the public interest, but no action has been taken. The State Department of Insurance currently regulates Blue Cross/Blue Shield payments to hospitals, which accounts for about 35% of all hospital income.