

Ellsworth County Medical Center Improvement Survey 2008

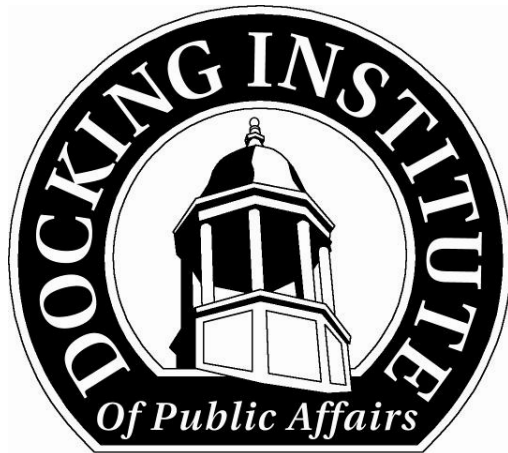
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December 2008

Prepared For
Ellsworth County Medical Center

By

**The Docking Institute of Public Affairs
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Mission:

To Facilitate Effective Public Policy Decision-Making.

The staff of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and its University Center for Survey Research are dedicated to serving the people of Kansas and surrounding states.

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Ellsworth County Medical Center Improvement Survey

Executive Summary

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University conducted a telephone survey of 464 residents in Ellsworth County, Kansas from September 25 to September 30, 2008. The survey was designed to investigate general public opinions on two initiatives considered by the Ellsworth County Medical Center (ECMC): 1) the construction of a medical training facility and 2) the conversion of all patient rooms to private rooms.

The Docking Institute's analysis finds:

- About three fourths (75.7%) of all the respondents strongly agree or agree that the ECMC should add an education and training center for its medical staff. About fifteen percent (15.3%) of them disagree or strongly disagree. Among those who neither strongly agree nor agree, 32.15% strongly agree or agree that the ECMC should have such center if the center could also be used for patients and members of the community for health education.
- More than sixty percent (62.7%) of all the respondents strongly agree or agree that the ECMC should consider making all of the hospital rooms private. Less than thirty percent (28.2%) disagree or strongly disagree.
- Almost thirty percent (29.2%) of all the respondents think that only sales tax should be used to finance the proposed improvements. About three percent (2.6%) of the respondents think the improvements should be financed by property tax only. About twenty-seven percent (27.2%) think the improvements should be financed by a combination of sales and property taxes. About a third (33.7%) of the respondents are strongly opposed to the use of either tax.
- The improvement plan has been publicized in Ellsworth County. Among those who had heard about the proposed improvements before the survey, 63.3% of the respondents think the improvements can be financed by either sales tax or property tax or a combination of both taxes. Among those who had not heard about the improvements before, 56.4% support use of sales tax or property tax or a combination of both.
- About sixty percent (59.2%) of registered voters think the improvements can be financed by either sales tax or property tax or a combination of both taxes. Sixty percent of non-registered voters think the same.

- Costs to patients and the community and benefits to the community are two big concerns of people who need more information to decide whether to support or oppose the proposed improvements.
- Eighty respondents provided suggestions for the ECMC to improve its services. More than twenty percent (22.5%) of them think the hospital needs more doctors.

Research Objectives

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University conducted a random digit dialed telephone survey for the Ellsworth County Medical Center (ECMC). The survey was designed to measure general public support for two initiatives under consideration by ECMC, 1) the construction of a medical training facility and 2) the conversion of all patient rooms to private rooms. It was agreed between ECMC and the Docking Institute that the survey research's objective was to provide initial public opinion only. As with public issues, once an education campaign/lobbying/debate occurs, public opinion can change dramatically.

Method

From September 25 to September 30, 2008, a random digit dialed telephone survey was conducted on a randomly selected sample of households in Ellsworth County. Within randomly selected households, adults (at least 18 years or older) with the most recent birthday were selected to maximize random selection of respondents within each household. A total of 662 randomly selected adults were contacted with 464 interviews completed, resulting in a cooperation rate of 70%. At a 95% confidence level, the margin of error for the full sample of 464 is 4.55%, assuming no response bias. A margin of error of 4.55% means that there is a 95% probability that findings among the sample vary no more than +/- 4.55% from the value that would be found if the full population of interest could be studied, assuming no response bias. In the field of telephone survey research, a cooperation rate of 70% and a margin of error of 4.55% at a 95% confidence interval are considered acceptable to generalize to the larger population.

Appendix 1 reports distributions on demographic characteristics of the sample and, where possible, Ellsworth County population parameters for the same demographic characteristics. The sample has higher percentages of female and elderly people (50 years and older in age) than the overall population. For other social indicators, especially those indicators representing household characteristics, differences between the sample statistic and the population parameter are within or very close to the overall sample margin of error.

As the older age groups were over-surveyed, weights were developed as shown in Appendix 2. These weights were applied to the data, and analysis results were compared with the results obtained from unweighted data. The comparison shows no significant difference, so this report only presents the results obtained from unweighted data.

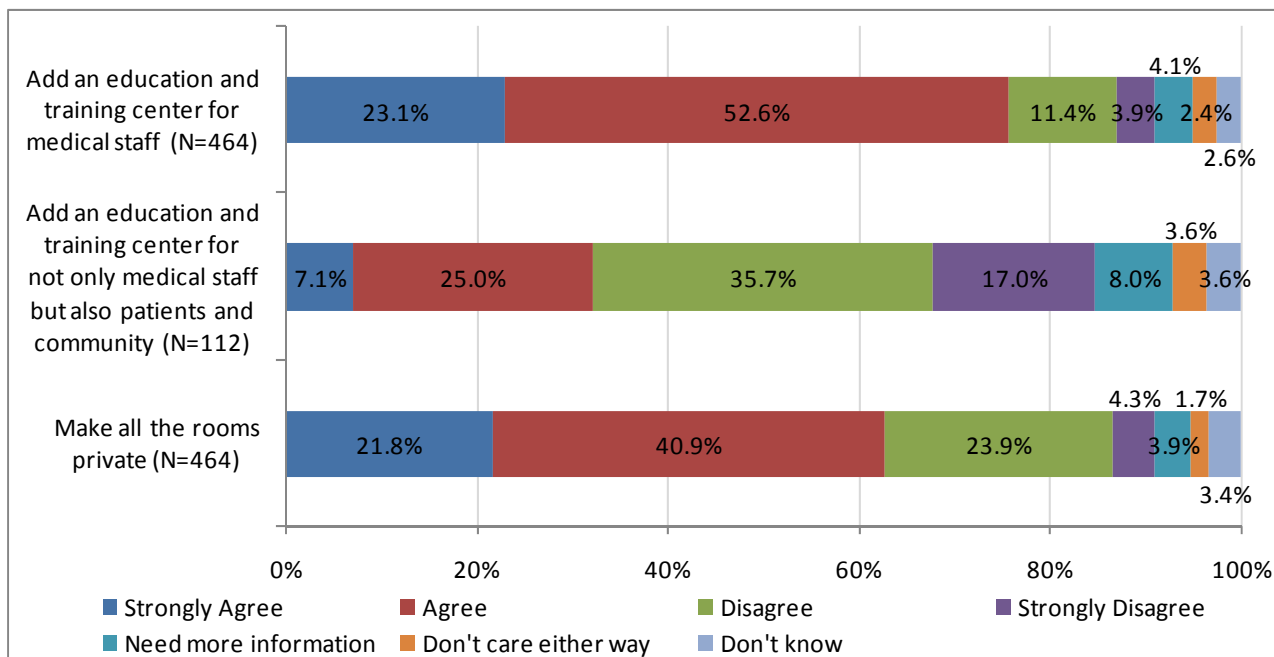
Findings from Survey

The survey starts by asking whether the respondent agrees or disagrees that the ECMC should add an education and training center for its medical staff. The training center would help the medical staff be up-to-date in their medical training, and also provide equipment to link the ECMC to universities and hospitals. Respondents are given the following choices for their answer: 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) disagree, 4) strongly disagree, 5) need more information, and 6) don't care either way. Any respondent whose answer is neither "strongly agree" nor "agree" is asked if they would answer the first question differently if the proposed training center could also be used by patients for health education, and by members of the community who want to take college courses. The third question in the survey asks if the respondent agrees or disagrees that the ECMC should convert all of the double rooms to single rooms and add an additional 11 private rooms.

Figure 1 shows respondents' answers to these three questions. A little more than three fourths (75.7%) of all the respondents strongly agree or agree that the ECMC should add an education and training center for its medical staff. The remaining one fourth of respondents (113 out of 464) answered otherwise. About fifteen percent (15.3%) of them disagree or strongly disagree, 4.1% need more information to make decision, 2.4% do not care either way, and 2.6% do not know. Those people who neither agree nor strongly agree were asked if they would strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the ECMC should have the proposed center if the center could also be used for patient health education and by members of the community. One hundred twelve respondents provided valid answers to this question. Out of those 112 respondents, 32.1% strongly agree or agree that the ECMC should add the proposed education and training center. More than half (52.7%) of them disagree or strongly disagree that the center is needed.

Figure 1 also shows that 62.7% of 464 respondents strongly agree or agree that the ECMC should consider making improvements so that all of the hospital rooms are private. Less than thirty percent (28.2%) disagree or strongly disagree that the ECMC should make all of the rooms private.

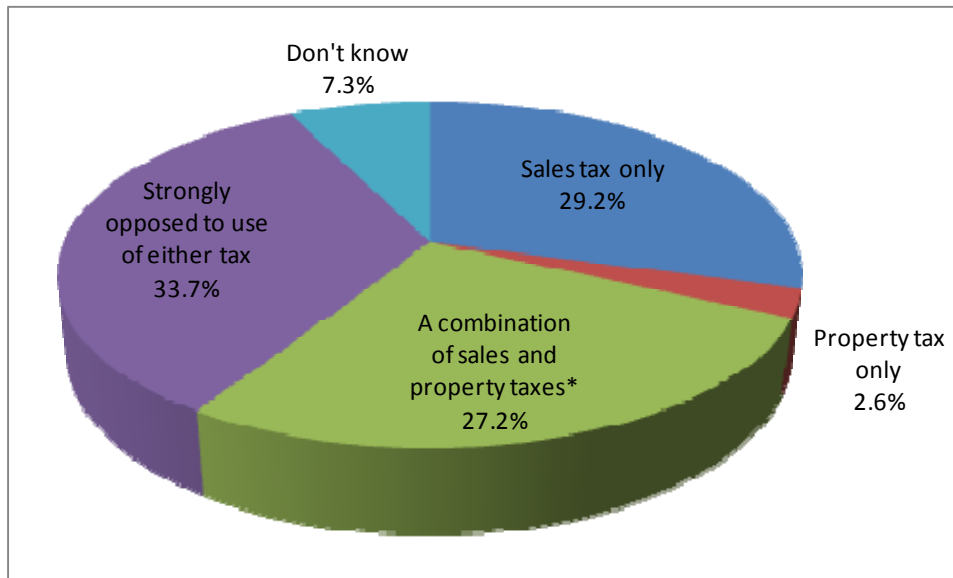
Figure 1: Training Center Construction and Room Conversion



Nineteen respondents indicated that they needed more information in answering the first question, nine respondents needed more information in answering the second question, and eighteen needed more information in answering the third question. These forty-six respondents were asked what information would be important for them so that they could make an informed decision. Eighteen valid answers were obtained, which are listed in Appendix 3. Most people are concerned about the cost of the improvements and the benefits the community can receive.

The fifth question in the survey asks if respondents think that some of the money to finance the improvement should come from sales tax only, property tax only, a combination of sales tax and property tax, or if they are strongly opposed to the use of either tax. Figure 2 shows that 29.2% of all the respondents think that only sales tax should be used, and 2.6% of the respondents think the improvements should be financed by property tax only. About twenty-seven percent (27.2%) think the improvements should be financed by a combination of sales and property taxes. About a third (33.7%) of the respondents are strongly opposed to the use of either tax.

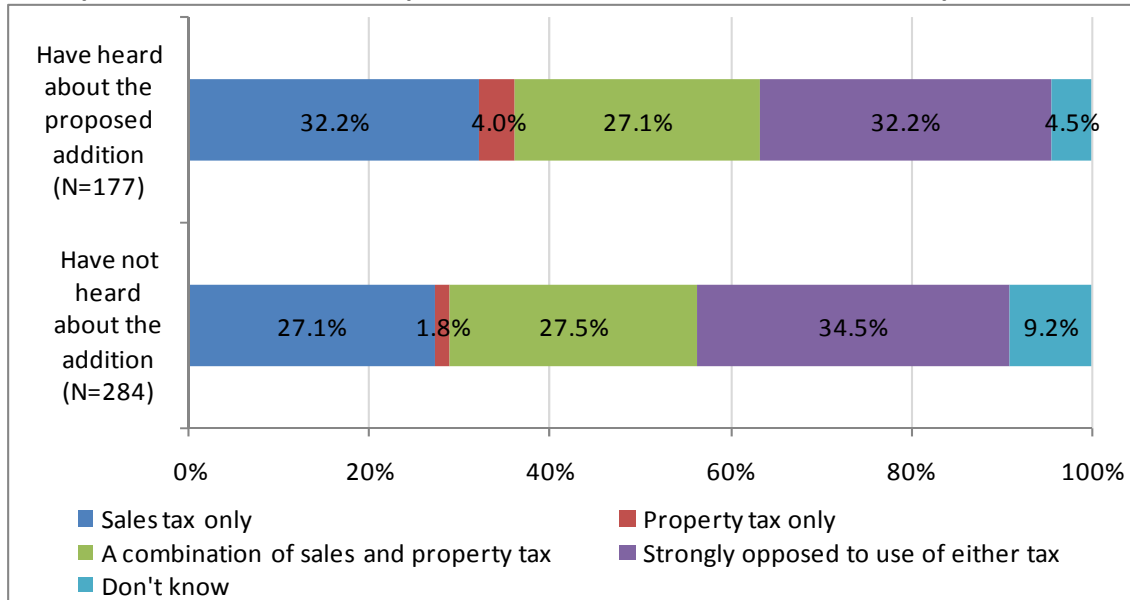
Figure 2: Finance of the Proposed Improvements (N=463)



* The figure shows the analysis results using the unweighted data. The analysis using the weighted data shows that 31.9% of all the respondents think the proposed improvements should be financed by a combination of sales and property taxes. The difference between 31.9% and 27.2% is a little more than the margin of error of this study (+/- 4.55%).

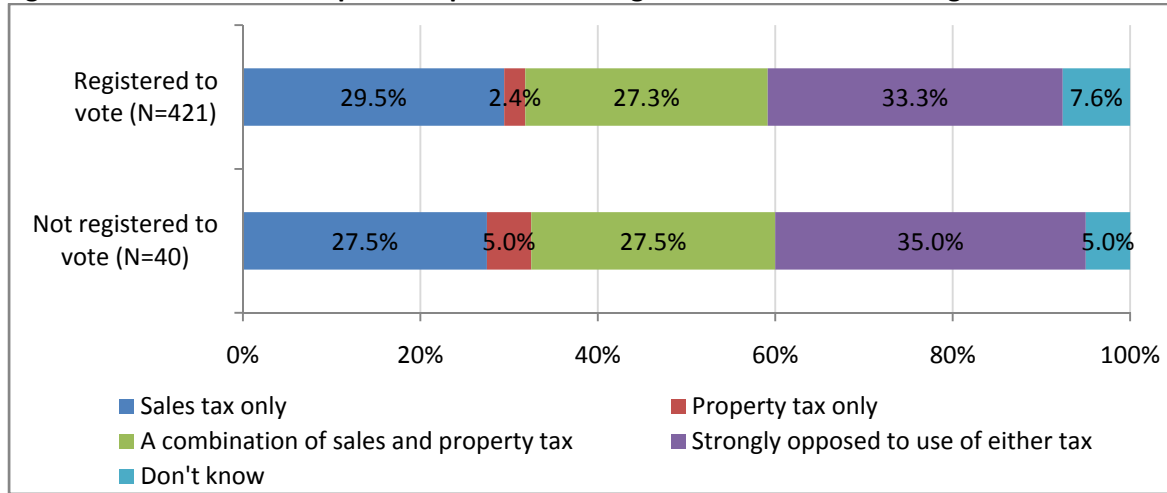
Before the survey, a news article publicized the improvement plan in detail. The article presented the projects taken on by the medical center before, and also indicated that currently Ellsworth County will not need a tax levy to repay this previous hospital debt. People who have heard before the survey about the proposed improvements (especially from the news article) might be more supportive of using taxes to finance the improvements than those who have not heard about it. Therefore the survey has a question asking if the respondent has heard about the proposed improvements. Valid answers were provided by 462 respondents, among whom 177 said “Yes” and 285 said “No.” Figure 3 compares the answers of those 177 respondents who had hear about the improvements to the fifth question with the answers of those 285 respondents who had not. People who had heard about the improvements before the survey have a more distinct stance on use of taxes. More than ninety-five percent (95.5%) of the respondents who had heard about the improvements indicate that they either support or oppose use of taxes to partially finance the medical center improvement. Among those who had not heard about the improvements before, 90.8% have a distinct stance. People who had heard about the improvements before the survey tend to be more supportive of the use of taxes than those who had not heard about the improvements before. Almost a third (32.2%) of the respondents who had heard about the improvements think the improvements should be financed by only sales tax; four percent of them think the improvements should be financed by property tax only. Among those who had not heard about the improvements, 27.1% think only sales tax should be used, and 1.8% think only property tax should be used. The two groups have almost the same percent of people who think the improvement should be financed by a combination of sales and property taxes. Overall, 63.3% of the respondents who had heard about the improvements think the improvements can be financed by either sales tax or property tax or a combination of both taxes. Among those who had not heard about the improvements before, 56.4% support use of sales tax or property tax or a combination of both.

Figure 3: Finance of the Proposed Improvement: Respondents Who Had Heard About the Improvements Before vs. Respondents Who Had Not Heard About the Improvements



Whether people are registered voters may affect their opinion on using taxes to finance the proposed improvements too. The survey has a question asking whether the respondent is registered to vote. Among 462 respondents who provided valid answers, 91.3% said “Yes”; “8.7%” said “No” (see Appendix 1). Figure 4 compares the answers of registered voters to the fifth question with the answers of non-registered voters. Registered voters’ answers are not significantly different from those of non-registered voters. A third (33.3%) of registered voters are strongly opposed to use of either sales tax or property tax. A slightly higher percent (35%) of non-registered voters are strongly opposed to use of either tax. About sixty percent (59.2%) of registered voters think the improvements can be financed by either sales tax or property tax or a combination of both taxes. Sixty percent of non-registered voters think the same.

Figure 4: Finance of the Proposed Improvement: Registered Voters vs. Non-registered Voters



The survey also asks respondents to provide suggestions that would help the ECMC improve its services. Appendices 4, 5, and 6 present respondents' answers. Among 80 respondents who provided suggestions, more than 20 percent (22.5%) of them think the hospital needs more doctors. The surveyors also recorded any comments from respondents during the survey. The comments are listed in Appendices 7 and 8. High taxes and costs of improvements appear to be the top concerns of respondents.

Appendix 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Social Indicators		Survey Sample	Population
Gender	Male	(N=464) 46.8%	54.2% ^a
	Female	53.2%	45.8% ^a
Household Income	Less than \$10,000	(N=392) 2.6%	6.6% ^b
	\$10,000 to \$19,999	9.7%	10.1% ^b
	\$20,000 to \$29,999	12.0%	11.6% ^b
	\$30,000 to \$39,999	18.9%	13.2% ^b
	\$40,000 to \$49,999	18.4%	12.0% ^b
	\$50,000 to \$59,999	15.1%	10.9% ^b
	\$60,000 to \$69,999	8.7%	Data not available
	\$70,000 to \$99,999	8.7%	Data not available
\$100,000 or more	6.1%	Data not available	
Employment Status	Working	(N=462) 48.9%	68.2% ^c
	Homemaker	4.8%	Data not available
	Unemployed	1.5%	3.2% ^d
	Retired	39.4%	22.6% ^e
	Disabled	5.4%	Data not available
Registered to Vote	Yes	(N=462) 91.3%	Data not available
	No	8.7%	Data not available
Times Household Members Used ECMC in the Past Two Years	Mean	(N=407) 8.1	Data not available
	Standard deviation	13.6	Data not available

Appendix 1 (cont.): Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Social Indicators		Survey Sample	Population
		(N=461)	
Education	Less than high school	3.3%	15.2% ^f
	High school graduate	33.8%	35.5% ^f
	Associates/Technical/Vocational school	10.4%	7.6% ^f
	Some college	26.5%	26.8% ^f
	College graduate	16.9%	11.2% ^f
	Post college graduate	9.1%	3.8% ^f
		(N=462)	
Age (of those 18 and older)	18 to 19 years	0.65%	3.2% ^a
	20 to 29 years	3.25%	18.1% ^a
	30 to 39 years	6.49%	14.7% ^a
	40 to 49 years	11.47%	16.9% ^a
	50 to 59 years	25.32%	17.8% ^a
	60 to 69 years	21.86%	12.3% ^a
	70 to 79 years	19.91%	8.5% ^a
	80 years and over	11.04%	8.5% ^a

^a Source: U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). This information is 2007 estimate. This figure represents individuals that are 18 years of age or older.

^b Source: U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). This is the information in 2000.

^c Source: The 2007 employment information is obtained from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://bls.gov>). This figure is calculated by dividing the 2006 employment by the 2007 population estimate for people who were 18 years old and over

^d Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://bls.gov>). The figure represents the official unemployment rate for Ellsworth County in 2007.

^e Source: U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). This is the information in 2006. This figure represents those individuals that are age 65 or older, and is used only as a rough estimate for retired individuals.

^f Source: U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov>). This is the information in 2000. This figure represents individuals that are 25 years of age or older.

Appendix 2: Age Groups and Weights

	Population (Census 2007 estimates)	Population Percentage	Sample	Sample Percentage	Weight
18 to 19 years	166	3.20%	3	0.65%	4.93
20 to 29 years	939	18.06%	15	3.25%	5.56
30 to 39 years	766	14.73%	30	6.49%	2.27
40 to 49 years	879	16.91%	53	11.47%	1.47
50 to 59 years	927	17.83%	117	25.32%	0.70
60 to 69 years	638	12.27%	101	21.86%	0.56
70 to 79 years	442	8.50%	92	19.91%	0.43
80 years and over	442	8.50%	51	11.04%	0.77
Total	5199	100.00%	462	100.00%	

Appendix 3: Information Needed for Decision-making

Information Needed	Frequency
Cost.	1
Cost. How will it be used?	1
Costs and benefit. Future revenues are from that.	1
Don't know.	3
Have to know if it is cost effective, and what they would be accomplishing.	1
How many people are going to be employed?	1
How many rooms are already private?	1
How much would they cost? How much insurance will we be paying?	1
How the money will be spent?	1
Mainly the cost, since medicare is cutting down.	1
More about the cost vs. benefits.	1
Stipulation on if they have to stick around Ellsworth County? Costs to the community.	1
Tax information.	1
The price of the room and how it would benefit the community as a whole.	1
The public needs to have an open meeting so everything can be explained rather than just reading it in the paper.	1
Would it increase insurance to be in a private room or double room?	1

Appendix 4: Suggestions for Improving ECMC Services: Health Service

Suggestions for Health Service	Frequency
Need more doctors (M.D.).	18
All staff members need more professional training to improve skills and quality, to be able to answer the questions about insurance and other clinical questions.	3
Need to be able to do more services here, such as broken bones, obstetrics, surgeries, outpatient surgical, orthopedic, dermatology, and so on.	3
Waiting time is too long. Service is slow. Doctors' response is slow.	3
Need better doctors.	2
Need to improve paperwork maintenance, admission, medical charge, and handling of records; too slow.	2
Continue bringing outside help in the clinic, and possibly provide out-patient service.	1
Doctors are not always professional.	1
Have a doctor at the hospital 24/7.	1
ICU needs more than one room.	1
It is like a state care.	1
Keep more medical insurance down. Help the citizens that need more help.	1
Need to improve kitchen. Too much processed food, not enough attention to special diets.	1
Need a pool for aquatic therapy.	1
Need better care takers.	1
Need to have a lab that can do testing and not turn patients away who come to the Medical Center for all their medical needs.	1
Nurses and doctors need more training.	1
Overpriced for the services you get. You can go to Salina and get it for cheaper.	1
Remove fly-by night nurses that work there at night; remove on-call nurses; nurses know the people well	1
The wellness center needs to have oxygen facility.	1
There service is getting worse compared with five years ago.	1
Update equipment and bring in new specialist.	1
Need more bedside matters.	1
Need to pay more attention to patients.	1

Appendix 5: Suggestions for Improving ECMC Services: Administration

Suggestions for Administration	Frequency
Need new management. Training center is sorely needed. They need to bring in new talent and new administration to run the place.	2
Administer is interested in promoting himself and not the hospital.	1
Administration needs training.	1
Need better working environment.	1
Need a whole new building.	1
Don't get too big too quick. They keep adding on too fast.	1
It is a small hospital. They have sites they could go to. Stop taxing the people.	1
Train the custodian workers. They need to have a cleaner facility and it needs to be checked up on periodically. The last visit I had was very sad.	1
Link to Salina Regional Hospital. Better communication. Access to doctors that are in Salina but work with Ellsworth hospital.	1
More staff members, including receptionists.	1
A little more rehab.	1
Add a wellness center that any people could go to.	1
Maybe they should join with the community and help run a daycare center.	1
No taxes; raise funds through private donations; set up a big fund raiser; expand wellness center.	1
Need better parking.	1
They do fairly fine the way it is now. For some reason they think we have deep pockets. I think we need a new administrator.	1

Appendix 6: Suggestions for Improving ECMC Services: Positive Comments

Positive Comments	Frequency
They are doing a good job.	1
They have a new place and have done well.	1
They are doing better now.	1
Like the fact of getting out-of-town doctors coming in. Doesn't think they need to be all single, but likes the increase of the bed size.	1
They have been improving lately and hope it keeps going.	1
They are top notch and is very happy with the services they provide.	1
I really do not use the hospital, but when I have been there things go pretty nicely.	1
It is a good place.	1
They do ok for a small deal.	1
They have done alright.	1
They are doing a fine job as they are.	1
Pleased with services the way they are.	1
Satisfied with them, they do a good job.	1
It is a very good hospital.	1

Appendix 7: Other Comments: Improvement Suggestions

Improvement Suggestions	Frequency
Tax payers should not bear the financial burden of the improvements. Taxes are already high enough.	12
Adding rooms would be bad for the people who do not have insurance because the cost would probably go up.	6
It is a bad idea to have only private rooms. You need to give people choices. Need to keep some double rooms.	5
Bad time to add an education training center to the hospital, and spend money.	5
A public meeting is needed so that people can be more informed about all the decisions to be made.	3
I liked the company of the other person in the hospital room. If the hospital put one "ok" person and one "bad off" person in the room, they could help each other when nurses didn't come.	2
It's a band-aid stop. For anything major they just bandage you up and send you to Salina.	2
Training center was a "stupid idea."	1
Change the administration system.	1
It is unfair to provide a wellness center to only those with the financial means.	1
Sales tax should not be increased because it is a small community. They need to work on their staff before adding more room; they can't handle what they already have.	1
The hospital could make good use of the training center, but the space might be better utilized in other ways.	1
Last winter the rooms were overcrowded and people had to stay in ER rooms. An area should be added for baby delivery.	1
Need to work with hospitals in Salina because the ECMC does not provide certain services.	1
I live on the border of Ellsworth County and rarely use the ECMC. I do not support the plan because I do not want to pay taxes.	1
With the economy as it is right now things should stay the way they are right now.	1
The training center is not necessary because if someone needed extra care they could just go to Salina or Hutchinson.	1

Appendix 7 (cont.): Other Comments: Improvement Suggestions

Improvement Suggestions	Frequency
Would like to see some additions.	1
Bringing in more doctors that are more specialized in different areas.	1
I feel they should use the space they already have. They just built an additional building not too long ago.	1
We need to get more doctors and nurses in our hospital.	1
I would like to have a private room when I go to the hospital.	1
I would rather make the drive to Salina to get better help.	1
Need another M.D.	1
The change to all private rooms is more important than having the education and training center.	1
Clinical staff can go to Barton or somewhere else to learn rather than building a center in the hospital.	1
Would like to see more return from the hospital they have now before any add-ons were considered.	1
Nurses and doctors do not wash their hands before or after her appointments or surgeries.	1
The medical center needs new administration.	1
The medical center needs 20 extra rooms not just 11.	1
Some of the doctors are getting old. The hospital needs to plan for the future.	1
Need to improve administration.	1
The clinic is rarely on time.	1
Training and up to date technology both need improvement.	1
The hospital does a good job of bringing in specialists from other places.	1

Appendix 8: Other Comments: Positive Comments

Positive Comments	Frequency
Ellsworth Medical Center is doing a great job.	14
The hospital was doing a great job.	11
Very satisfied with the Medical Center.	11
For a small town, Ellsworth has an excellent hospital and great care.	3
The hospital is doing a fantastic job according to experience of hers and her family members.	2
Received excellent care from the doctors and nurses.	2
The medical center was just fine. It was new and they did a fine job with what they had.	2
The proposed improvements are good ideas.	1
Things have improved a lot. The hospital is on the right track.	1
Good facility.	1

Appendix 9: Telephone Survey Instrument

ECMC 2008 Improvement Survey

Introduction

Hi. I'm calling from Fort Hays State University. We are calling residents of Ellsworth County to ask for their opinion regarding improvements being considered for the Ellsworth County Medical Center. I need to speak with the adult in the household over the age of 17 with the most recent birthday. Is that you?

[ONCE RESPONDENT IS REACHED]

Your answers will remain completely confidential. May I ask you a few questions?

Q1 First, the Medical Center is considering the addition of an education and training center for medical staff to help ensure that they are up-to-date in their medical training. There would be equipment in the training center to link the Medical Center to universities and hospitals. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the Medical Center should add an education and training center for its medical staff?

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree
- 8 Need more information
- 9 Don't care either way

[IF ANY RESPONSE OTHER THAN AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE ON Q1]

Q2 What if the training center could also be used by patients for health education, and by members of the community who want to take college courses? Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the Medical Center should add an education and training center?

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree
- 8 Need more information
- 9 Don't care either way

Q3 The Medical Center is also considering making all of the rooms private. To do this, they would convert all of the double rooms to single rooms, and add an additional 11 private rooms. If it did this, the number of beds in the hospital would increase from 20 beds to 25 beds. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the Medical Center should consider making improvements so that all of the hospital rooms are private?

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree
- 8 Need more information
- 9 Don't care either way

[IF ANY RESPONDENT INDICATED THEY NEEDED MORE INFORMATION FOR Q1, Q2, OR Q3]

Q4 What information would be important for you to have so that you could make an informed decision? _____

Q5 The Medical Center will use the information you and other residents of Ellsworth County have provided to help decide whether these projects should be pursued. If either of these projects are supported, some of the money would need to come from the citizens of Ellsworth County through county taxes. Do you think that the taxes should come from sales tax only, property tax only, a combination of sales and property tax, or are you strongly opposed to the use of either tax to support the potential projects?

- 1 Sales tax only
- 2 Property tax only
- 3 A combination of sales and property taxes
- 4 Strongly opposed to use of either tax
- 8 Don't Know or Not Sure

Q6 Do you have any suggestions that would help Ellsworth County Medical Center improve its services in other ways?

Q6b Had you already heard about the proposed addition of single rooms and a training center for the hospital prior to this survey? Yes/No

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Q7 And now we have a few questions to help us analyze the results of the survey. Are you currently working, a homemaker, retired, disabled, or unemployed or laid off?

Q8 Are you registered to vote?

Q9 How many times have members of your household used the services of Ellsworth County Medical Center in the past two years?

Q10 What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Q11 Total family income for the last year?

Q12 What year were you born? _____

Q13 Gender

Silent – Did the respondent make any other comments about the hospital or the hospital's plans? Enter them here.