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Archive Edition: **Friday, March 6, 2009**

Millwood doctor attends gathering

By Jessica J. Burchard
The Winchester Star

Winchester — A Millwood physician gave his ideas for improved health care to President Barack Obama Thursday.

Jeffrey Harris, an internal medicine specialist working in the Winchester area since 1977, was among more than 120 people attending the president's health-care summit in the White House.

"I was obviously very thrilled to be included as a member of the American College of Physicians," he said in a phone interview. "It was a very exciting afternoon."

Harris is president of the ACP, a 125,000-member organization of internists that is the second-largest physician group after the American Medical Association.



Dr. Jeffrey Harris

During the summit, Harris and about 40 government officials, doctors, and medical leaders sat in the White House's East Room and discussed the problems with the health-care system.

"There were a host of issues," the 62-year-old Harris said. "One was about

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finance and another was about reforms.”

About \$2.4 trillion is spent on health care each year in the United States, more than any other country, according to The Associated Press.

This number is likely to climb, since Obama has proposed a federal budget that includes a \$634 billion “down payment” for expanded health-care coverage over a 10-year period. The government will spend additional trillions on health care during the same period.

His goal is to have accessible and affordable health care for all Americans.

An estimated 48 million Americans lack health insurance, according to AP.

Harris suggested one way to alleviate pressure on the health-care system: training more physicians as primary caregivers.

“About 30 percent of doctors here are primary caregivers,” he said. “In other countries, 50 percent of doctors are in primary care. Primary care is the means of providing better care at an affordable price.”

He added that increasing the number of general practitioners will mean people can lead longer, healthier lives.

“For day-in, day-out care over years, you need a general-care physician,” Harris said.

Although he said he took no position on Obama’s health-care plans, Harris did agree that the problems in the system should be addressed soon.

“There’s probably no issue in front of Congress bigger than this health-care issue.”

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— Contact Jessica J. Burchard at