Among the most nettlesome obstacles in the yearlong debate over increasing the accessibility and affordability of health insurance has been the question of what effect health care reform legislation would have on the incidence of abortion.

Thus begins Dr. Patrick Whelan's discussion of a study of the Massachusetts health insurance program, Commonwealth Care, upon which the Senate's health care reform bill draws. The study was published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Whelan's conclusion: "The recent experience in Massachusetts suggests that universal health care coverage has been associated with a decrease in the number of abortions performed."

Read more.

Whelan is on the pediatrics faculty at Harvard Medical School and is a pediatric rheumatology specialist at Massachusetts General Hospital for Children in Boston. He is also a member of the NCR board of directors.