

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE TO THE “DEATH PANELS” CLAIM
IN THE DEBATE ON HEALTH CARE REFORM THAT LED TO THE
PASSAGE OF PATIENT PROTECTION AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

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ABSTRACT

This project analyzed how newspapers responded to the “death panels” claim made by Sarah Palin in the debate that led to the passage of the Affordable Care Act. I examined a period of one week starting the day after Palin made her claim. I performed a Lexis-Nexis search on the term “death panel.” A content analysis was performed to determine whether reporters addressed the veracity of the claim. While reporters correctly stated that the claim was false nearly 70 percent of the time, the claim remained in the public debate until the Affordable Care Act was passed. This showed that misinformation is difficult to remove from the public debate, and more research is required to find the best methods to refute misinformation.