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**TITLE: '*Our health system in intensive care*': Newspaper representations of Australia's dual public/private health care system**

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Australia's dual public/private healthcare system means people must make choices about their healthcare, including whether to purchase private health insurance and which healthcare services to access. The media shapes the context in which these choices are made, and directs attention to certain issues, reflecting the views of various interest groups. Taking a social constructionist approach, this paper reports on a discourse analysis of Australian newspaper reporting on public and private healthcare between 2011 and 2013. We found various media devices, including alarmist headlines, metaphors, statistics, and images, to portray the health system in a way which legitimizes and privileges private healthcare. Although some positive messages about the public system are present, more prominent are negative messages about waiting times and patient safety in public healthcare. Rising healthcare premiums for patients is a prominent theme. Rarely is it made explicit that costs are usually incurred when accessing private healthcare. The media is implicated in the framing of choice as a protection against the shortcomings of the public health system, and in the shaping of consumer healthcare concerns and actions.