

Employer-provided health plans may disappear

By Neil Irwin, New York Times

The days of Americans getting health insurance through their employers may be numbered – and the change could be just as profound as the shift of employers forcing employees to manage their own retirement savings.

As the Affordable Care Act goes from thousands of pages of legalese to actual, real-life public policy, the future of employer-provided health insurance is one of the most fascinating questions. Will employers call for – and their workers accept – the practice of buying health insurance through government exchanges? How much will companies save, and will they pass those savings onto employees? Will it make workers more mobile and ready to shift jobs, or will employer-paid health insurance become a sought-after perk?

The answers go to the heart of how things work in a sector that is one-eighth of the American economy. A new report gives some hints of how large the impact might be.

By 2020, about 90 percent of American workers who now receive health insurance through their employers will be shifted to government exchanges created by the health law, according to a projection by S&P Capital IQ, a research firm serving the financial industry.

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