

# Commission to Study Primary Care Medical Practice

## ARTICLES<sup>1</sup> ON NATIONAL TRENDS

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<sup>1</sup> In the interest of saving paper, printed copies only include excerpts of these reports. The full articles are provided on-line at: <http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/primarycare.htm>.

*Health Affairs*, 26, no. 6 (2007): 1586-1598

doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.26.6.1586

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## Unhealthy Trends: The Future Of Physician Services

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**PROLOGUE:** *Health Affairs* came into the world just a few months before Paul Starr's *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, published in 1982. Starr's influence was profound, even when he overstated his case. In the 1990s many analysts and experts assumed on Starr's authority that the medical profession was on the brink of corporatization. The empirical signals were mixed. But for managed care and managed competition to transform the delivery system, medicine would have to emerge from its cottage-industry cocoon. So people believed. When it didn't happen, the wheels came off the decade's preeminent policy bandwagon.

Instead, the organization of medical practice has evolved according to its own script, more slowly than Starr and others expected, in different directions, and in an environment quite unlike what the apostles of managed competition had in mind. As Starr himself cautioned, "A trend is not necessarily fate. Images of the future are usually only caricatures of the present." To the extent that it has occurred, the corporatization of medicine has been primarily small-scale and local, into single- rather than multispecialty groups, and under fee-for-service rather than capitated reimbursement. One- and two-physician practices seem finally to be evanescing. But the following review by Hoangmai Pham and Paul Ginsburg, based on more than a decade of painstaking local surveys and interviews, suggests that the changes that have finally begun to occur in physician organization are not necessarily focused on achieving a more rational allocation of resources or more efficient and effective care. Although some of the changes have the potential to unlock health system improvements, others may be leading toward further growth of excess spending and overuse of services.

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### Abstract

In this paper we review current trends in payment systems, work settings, favored services, and accountability mechanisms that characterize physician practice. Current trends are pointing to higher spending, more tiering of access to care by ability to pay, and a greater role for larger practices that include both primary care and specialist physicians. Medicare's purchasing role is policymakers' most powerful lever to alter negative trends. Making fee-for-service payment more accurately reflect cost structures could immediately address some of these issues. Medicare

can lead longer-term efforts to incorporate more per episode and capitated elements into the payment system, revamping incentives for physicians.

RECENT YEARS HAVE WITNESSED many changes in how office-based physicians organize their practices to deliver medical services. Physicians are moving into larger practices and loosening affiliations with general hospitals; providing more ancillary services; and investing in enterprises that compete with hospitals for outpatient, or even inpatient, services.

Some of these developments may be undesirable if they lead to overuse of services or questionable quality of care. For example, physicians respond to inadvertent financial incentives by favoring services that are paid for particularly well over services that are paid for poorly. More physician services are subject to self-referral incentives. And the payment system has not evolved to support changes in practice, such as additional care coordination, to treat a growing number of patients with multiple chronic diseases. But other trends may be desirable, such as growing expectations that physicians will make evidence-based care decisions. And physicians' increasing use of health information technology (IT) may facilitate system-level approaches to improve care delivery.

In this paper we describe recent trends in the delivery of physician services and discuss what they portend if left unchecked. Then we discuss a range of possible policy initiatives to alter these trends and achieve better outcomes for society.

## **Traditional Delivery Of Services By Office-Based Physicians**

**Office versus hospital functions.** Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the predominant model of care for the majority of physicians included a clear demarcation between the types of services delivered in their offices and those delivered in hospital settings. For primary care physicians (PCPs) and many specialists, the office was the base of their practice—where they provided consultations, ongoing ambulatory care, and minor tests such as blood tests and electrocardiograms. These physicians traditionally viewed the hospital as their "workshop." In that setting, in inpatient or outpatient departments, physicians tended to provide services that were more technology dependent—diagnostic procedures such as endoscopies or advanced imaging reliant on (then) expensive equipment—and major procedures such as surgeries requiring operating rooms and support staff. Although they did not perform major procedures, PCPs and cognitive specialists such as endocrinologists also used hospitals as workshops where they managed care for their patients who required hospital admission. Because the hospital housed the workshop, it received payments from insurers to cover the costs of staff and the facility, while physicians received fees for the professional services they delivered there.

**Privileges and responsibilities.** The workshop function was a central element in the complex, symbiotic relationship between hospitals and physicians on their medical staffs.<sup>1</sup> Some physicians, such as anesthesiologists, have always had distinctive contracts with hospitals because they are largely hospital based; others, such as obstetricians, have developed tighter affiliations with hospitals over time. But for most physicians, the expectation was that they

would accept certain responsibilities in exchange for staff privileges allowing them to use the hospital workshop. Chief among these were providing call coverage, for both admitted patients and those, including uninsured or publicly insured patients, needing evaluation in the emergency department; service on hospital governance committees; and teaching responsibilities at hospitals with training programs. Physicians who were primarily office based thus assumed parts of the hospital's mission as members of its medical staff but were largely free to use the workshop as autonomous practitioners.

**Limited accountability.** In this milieu, physicians faced limited accountability for their performance, largely because the available tools for quality assurance were blunt: licensing and accreditation requirements; oversight from licensing boards in cases of gross negligence or unethical behavior; and the threat of malpractice litigation. In theory, continuation of hospital privileges was subject to assessments that the physician provided adequate quality of care, but enforcement was usually limited to egregious outlier cases.<sup>2</sup> The prevailing culture revered the individual physician as hero, holding peer regard as primary and rarely invoking objective standards of practice, which left payers little role to play in monitoring the quality of care.

## **Increasing Accountability For Evidence-Based Practice**

**Development of practice guidelines.** A quiet revolution began in the late 1980s, fueled by an expanding volume of health services research and influential reports from the Institute of Medicine on the suboptimal quality of much of the medical care delivered in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Champions of evidence-based medicine contended that it was both possible and necessary to expect physicians to adhere to objective standards of care—"best practices" derived from scientific evidence—rather than only peer standards. Public and private organizations began publishing clinical practice guidelines, which were supported by most but not all physicians.<sup>4</sup> Some opponents viewed standardization as the antithesis of the experienced physician as hero and hence a direct attack on physician autonomy and professionalism. Others were skeptical that a meaningful fraction of clinical care could even be standardized. But the formidable challenge of staying abreast of medicine's rapidly expanding knowledge base contributed to a cultural shift that came to view compliance with standards as an important component of professionalism. Practice guidelines proliferated with growing acceptance from physicians.<sup>5</sup>

**Growing emphasis on the evidence base.** As the millennium ended, existing quality assurance tools such as board certification increasingly emphasized knowledge of the evolving evidence base. Maintenance of certification became a common requirement across specialty boards, signaling that as the science of medicine changed, physicians were expected to demonstrate their mastery of it.<sup>6</sup>

**Broadening of physician accountability.** However, practice guidelines and board certification are standards set by physician-peers. As traditionally adopted by hospitals and health plans for credentialing physicians, certification did not provide a real-time method of holding physicians accountable for quality of care. Other trends emerged, however, that promised to vastly broaden the scope of physician accountability, as government, plans, private purchasers, and accrediting bodies sought to assert influence over both quality assurance and quality improvement.

Standardized measurement of quality performance allowed benchmarking to give physicians private feedback, linkage of performance to financial and other incentives through pay-for-performance (P4P) models, and public reporting of providers' performance.<sup>7</sup> Performance measurement and incentive programs for physicians are less well developed than those for institutional providers and have similar limitations because they capture only specific aspects of care for a limited subset of conditions and physicians. But such programs have gained momentum in the past few years, particularly with the introduction of quality-reporting initiatives by professional organizations, accrediting agencies, and Medicare.<sup>8</sup> And they contribute to physicians' acknowledgement that other stakeholders have the right to monitor their behavior and hold them accountable.<sup>9</sup>

## **Limited Reorganization For More-Efficient Care Delivery**

Although physicians have become more responsive to expectations for evidence-based care, there hasn't been as dramatic an evolution in how physicians organize their practices to support the delivery of higher-quality care. Traditionally, most office-based physicians worked in solo or small group practices. During the height of tightly managed care, physicians started to coalesce into larger multi-specialty groups and independent practice associations (IPAs) in hopes of reaping the referral benefits of having PCPs and achieving a scale that might keep financial risks of capitation manageable. In 1996, only 15.6 percent of clinically active physicians practiced in groups of more than ten physicians. By 1999, 18.5 percent did so.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, hospitals formed tighter affiliations with physicians, such as in physician-hospital organizations (PHOs), to steer referrals.

**Fading capitation; increasing practice costs.** The loosening of managed care in the late 1990s brought the fading of capitation as a viable payment methodology in most markets. At the same time, physicians faced increasing practice costs that were not matched by trends in payment rates. Physicians, particularly certain specialists, began responding more directly to the financial incentives under fee-for-service (FFS) payment, which unintentionally favors technology-dependent procedures over cognitive services and which makes affiliation with PCPs less attractive, as specialists would have to subsidize relatively low primary care payments.

**Reorganization to reap higher payments.** Despite mounting evidence that large multispecialty groups are better able than smaller or less integrated practices to collect quality data and implement quality improvement, this model remains out of favor in most local markets.<sup>11</sup> One obstacle to performance measurement and incentive programs' having an impact remains the fragmented nature of U.S. care delivery systems.<sup>12</sup> Specialists have recently migrated into mid-size, single-specialty groups, not to reap the quality advantages but to negotiate higher payments, concentrate capital, and provide services that garner higher profit margins. On the other hand, the number of solo or two-person practices has been in steady decline over the past decade: The percentage of physicians in these settings dropped from 40.7 percent in 1996 to 32.5 percent in 2004.<sup>13</sup>

**Potential PCP shortages.** Simultaneously, disturbing trends have emerged in the PCP workforce. Although there has only been a slight decline in the overall proportion of physicians

who are primary care generalists (39.8 percent in 2000–01 to 36.7 percent in 2004–05), the decline has been mitigated by an increase in the proportion of women, who are more likely to choose primary care, entering medical practice.<sup>14</sup> If the entry of women represents a one-time shift, then future shortages might arise as relatively low incomes for PCPs make these career paths unattractive to new physicians. Among recent medical school graduates, a falling number choose to train in primary care specialties, although foreign medical graduates (FMGs) are compensating for the shortfall for the time being.<sup>15</sup> As generalists are best positioned to provide care coordination and comprehensive care for patients with multiple chronic conditions, policy goals of improving quality and efficiency will likely collide with these workforce and practice organization trends.

**Some positive countertrends.** On the other hand, some positive trends in the organization of physician care are worth noting. First, there appears to be a generational shift occurring in practice preferences. Younger physicians are more likely than older physicians to favor larger-group or institutional practice and to choose salaried employment, which could mute the effects of FFS financial incentives.<sup>16</sup>

Second, a slowly growing number of physicians are investing in electronic medical records (EMRs) and other health IT, which may support improvement in specific aspects of care by providing physicians with real-time access to data and clinical decision-support tools.<sup>17</sup> Health IT also can facilitate the performance measurement, improvement, and reporting efforts noted above. But large practices have been the most likely to adopt these new tools. This suggests that, short of government or accreditation mandates, widespread adoption will occur only when physician organizations broadly come to believe that it will efficiently support how they actually work; that is, when most of them practice in large networks that have adequate capital and can both make unified decisions regarding the investment in and optimal use of the integrative potential of the technology.

Finally, hospitalists (specialists who practice only inside the hospital, seeing patients referred there by other doctors) have grown in number and in the proportion of inpatient care that they provide.<sup>18</sup> Hospitalists have the potential to improve inpatient care delivery—in their focused clinical expertise, ability to quickly respond to problems, and the roles they can play in improving quality of care in hospitals. However, it remains to be seen whether use of hospitalists disrupts primary care relationships and traditional relationships between specialists and PCPs sufficiently to impair coordination of care.

## **Greater Physician Responsiveness To Financial Incentives**

These trends in how care is organized among traditionally office-based physicians have been driven in large part by the financial incentives that physicians face, which have long been distorted. We are not referring to the well-known incentives under FFS to provide too many services, or those under capitation to provide too few. Rather, within FFS, which accounts for most physician payment, physicians find differing financial rewards by types of services. We call this a distortion because we believe that within a payment system such as FFS that does not make a priori assumptions about the relative clinical value of different services, payers should avoid

making some services more profitable than others. In Medicare, for example, the original legislation specified that the program should not influence medical practice—just pay for it.

But such distortions are the unfortunate reality.<sup>19</sup> Procedures tend to be paid for better than cognitive services, and newer procedures tend to be paid for better than older ones. And in many cases, rewards for the technical portion of a service that pays for nurses, technicians, equipment, and supplies are greater than rewards for the professional portion that pays for the physician's time and effort.

**Growth of physician-owned specialty centers.** These distortions in payment are long-standing, but observations over the past six to seven years from the Community Tracking Study (CTS) site visits suggest that physicians are responding more to these distortions than in the past. The growth in physician entrepreneurship has been well documented.<sup>20</sup> Attributing the change to constraints on physicians' incomes from professional services, numerous respondents from hospitals, health plans, and physician organizations have described how the allure of profitable services has led to increased physician ownership of ambulatory surgical, imaging, and endoscopy centers and other freestanding facilities such as specialty hospitals. For example, the number of cardiac and orthopedic specialty hospitals serving Medicare patients grew from twenty-one in 1998 to sixty-seven in 2003, the majority of which were for-profit and owned in part by physicians.<sup>21</sup> The number of ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) grew more than 35 percent between 2000 and 2004, with 83 percent of existing centers partly or wholly owned by physicians.<sup>22</sup> In addition, physicians have brought the capacity for more diagnostic and therapeutic procedures into their practices. This has been a major motivation for the formation of larger single-specialty practices to achieve the scale needed to make these investments economically feasible. Changes in capital markets, such as greater availability of leasing, made it easier and less expensive for physicians to finance facilities and equipment. Equipment manufacturers have likely also responded by designing smaller models more suited to lower-volume operation.

The direction of any impact on the technical quality of these services is hard to predict. Quality could benefit from less bureaucratic organization and the ability of physician-owners to provide good quality. On the other hand, many practices may lack the resources or capabilities to assure high technical quality, even as they are less subject to external review than hospitals are. Stepped-up regulation of labs in physicians' offices in 1988 led many to close instead of changing their processes and infrastructure to meet higher standards.<sup>23</sup>

**Avoidance of undervalued services.** The flip side of physicians' responsiveness to financial incentives is their avoidance of providing services they perceive as undervalued. We've noted the decreasing attractiveness of primary care careers. There also has been a steady decline in the proportion of physicians willing to care for Medicaid and uninsured patients, in part because of low payment rates. Care for these patients is increasingly concentrated, with the quarter of physicians deriving the greatest proportion of their revenues from Medicaid now accounting for 51.0 percent of all Medicaid physician revenues, compared with 43.1 percent in 1996.<sup>24</sup> Physicians are also shedding some traditional responsibilities. A growing number avoid emergency department and other call duties at general hospitals or demand extra pay to take call, in part because of the time they lose to bill for a higher volume of outpatient visits. Because they

can now perform most procedures in freestanding facilities, some types of proceduralists (such as surgeons or cardiologists) have less need for workshops in general hospitals than in the past and so consider themselves less tethered to hospital service activities.<sup>25</sup>

**No payment for coordination of care.** Finally, outside of capitation arrangements, most current payment models not only undervalue cognitive services relative to procedures but also fail to pay at all for some types of desirable services. As patients live longer with more comorbid conditions, physicians face greater burdens for integrating their medical management. Yet many activities related to care coordination do not qualify for FFS payment, particularly those such as communication with patients and their families that occur outside of care encounters.<sup>26</sup>

## Extrapolation Of Recent Trends To The Future

**Health spending.** What will the delivery system look like if these trends continue? Many of the developments described will lead to rising health care spending. As physicians expand ownership of facilities providing diagnostic and therapeutic services, a higher percentage of spending will become subject to the influence of self-referral incentives.<sup>27</sup> Physician self-referral leads to much higher referral rates and may reflect services that either have small clinical benefit or are harmful, on balance. Greater capacity to provide ancillary services is also likely to lead to increased service use, through greater convenience for patients and productivity for physicians, as will the shift in the physician workforce toward specialization.<sup>28</sup>

Some effects from continuing trends could slow growth in health spending. Growth of outpatient facilities will allow insurers to negotiate lower unit prices (as a result of additional capacity and because freestanding facilities have lower overhead costs than hospitals have)—something we see now in CTS site visits. As benefit structures change, consumers may face more incentives to choose facilities with lower negotiated prices, such as freestanding facilities, rather than hospital outpatient departments. Cost sharing may lead some patients to resist recommendations for additional services or demand them less often. But some analysts believe that the trend toward higher patient cost sharing has peaked, along with any spending reductions associated with it. Insurers are likely to increase use of administrative controls to address what they perceive as overuse of services such as imaging. Some now also require authorization for procedures such as joint replacements. Current data are not definitive on the net impact on spending trends. We nevertheless expect an increase because it seems unlikely that limitations by insurers on use of services—constrained by the backlash against managed care—and acceptable increases in patient cost sharing will be a match for the powerful countervailing incentives that physicians face.

**Decline of smallest practices.** The smallest practices have been declining in favor of larger group practices and physician employment, and these trends may accelerate. In particular, market forces may once again favor the development of large, multispecialty practices, primarily because of the greater leverage they can exert in negotiating private payment. The rewards from P4P programs, benefit structures such as high-performance networks that favor more-efficient practices, and increasing price and quality transparency could all cause the relative earnings of physicians in large practices to rise, to the extent that these practices deliver higher-quality, more-efficient care. To the extent that larger practices gain market share on the basis of quality and

cost performance (for example, by investing in health IT), this change will be a positive one. Physicians' ability to earn higher incomes with perhaps lower productivity pressures in large practices than in smaller ones will lead more physicians, especially those just entering practice, to opt for larger and better-organized practices.

**Fewer well-trained PCPs.** The declining attractiveness of primary care has already led to declining enrollment in primary care residencies. The recent growth of retail clinics in pharmacies and supermarkets, which tend to be staffed by nurse practitioners, is a market response to constraints on primary care access. This could lead to a substitution in primary care of personnel who require less training than physicians. But if the services provided by so-called minute clinics turn out to be more profitable per unit of time than other primary care activities, this trend could further discourage physicians from entering primary care.

**Higher incomes to PCPs.** To the degree that PCPs are key to caring for patients with chronic diseases, large multispecialty practices and hospitals may seek a higher proportion of PCPs by offering higher incomes. This incentive would be in addition to the long-standing strategy among multispecialty practices to pay PCPs more than they typically earn in independent practice because of the specialty referrals they can generate. This would be a market response to an error in an administered pricing system—Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers artificially pay too little for primary care services, so organizations that perceive the higher value of primary care might attract generalists by paying them more.

**Less access for the poor.** More disturbingly, current trends in the delivery of physician services may contribute to an increasingly tiered delivery system.<sup>29</sup> Physician-owned facilities are less likely than general hospitals to serve Medicaid beneficiaries or the uninsured.<sup>30</sup> The increasing prevalence of physicians opting to drop contracts with insurers to receive higher out-of-network payments from patients will contribute further to disparities in access to providers.<sup>31</sup> And to the extent that spending on physician services contributes to rising costs, this will exacerbate the decline in employer-based coverage and growth in patient cost sharing, both of which disproportionately affect low-income people. More generally, greater competition from physicians for profitable services may hurt general hospitals financially, leading these hospitals to cut back on unprofitable services such as charity care that traditionally have been cross-subsidized by well-paid-for services.

## How Public Policymakers Might Intervene

Against that gloomy scenario, we discuss here the steps that policymakers could take to encourage more ideal models for delivery of physician services. Many opportunities for policymakers to influence physician practice come through Medicare's role as the single largest purchaser and source of revenue for most physicians. Even the most innovative private payers would find it challenging to spur large-scale changes in physicians' behavior without parallel action by Medicare.

**Reexamine Medicare regulation.** Starting with options most feasible in the short term, policymakers could make targeted strikes at some undesirable behavior—for example, by

reexamining regulatory and administrative rules within Medicare. In particular, expansions and more-stringent enforcement of laws against physician self-referral, and higher standards for the credentialing of providers, could help curb services with the highest volume growth, such as diagnostic testing.

**Restructure physician payment.** Given rapid growth in Medicare spending resulting from the rising volume of physician services, there is fiscal pressure on policymakers to further lower payments to physicians.<sup>32</sup> Despite adjustments that Congress has made to forestall cuts in Medicare payments dictated by the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, payments have not kept pace with rising practice costs and so have effectively decreased. However, continued use of such a blunt tool (whether applied as a single cap on all physician services or as separate caps on individual categories of services) would do little to discourage unnecessary services, encourage desirable ones, or fully address the payment disparities across different specialties. The incentives in FFS payments also dwarf rewards in existing P4P initiatives. Within the FFS context, policymakers would at least need to improve the accuracy of relative payment rates in Medicare to reflect the costs of providing specific services using more up-to-date cost data, and to remove the inadvertent incentives for physicians to favor certain services.<sup>33</sup> And they might consider payment for services that are not now paid for, such as care coordination, although defining measurable units of such services remains challenging.<sup>34</sup>

A more fundamental change in payment policy would be to transition out of a FFS structure to a greater reliance on per episode or capitated payment incentives.<sup>35</sup> As an initial step, policymakers could maintain FFS payment but reward or penalize physicians based on spending for their patients during typical care episodes or for a chronic condition during a period of time. The technical tools for doing so, such as software that compares physicians on cost performance for specific types of care episodes, grow increasingly sophisticated, and experience with their application in the private sector makes this increasingly feasible for Medicare, especially because rewards or penalties pose much less risk for practices than actual per episode payment does.<sup>36</sup> Experience with "softer" versions of per episode payment could lead to greater readiness in the future for more powerful versions.

Ultimately, however, FFS will never be optimal for achieving society's quality and cost goals, because of the underlying incentives to deliver more services and to ignore the costs of services delivered by other providers.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, relatively newer problems with FFS payment concern care for the growing number of patients with chronic illnesses, because there are too many important services that are not and cannot be paid for under such a structure. Services that need tailoring to individual patients (for example, education on disease self-management) would be difficult to specify meaningfully, as would services related to care coordination that involve multiple staff or occur outside of office visits, such as communicating with other providers.

To support physicians in providing such critical care functions, payers might create payment structures that encourage physicians to address patients' comprehensive, longitudinal care needs instead of responding to fees on a service-by-service basis. Payers have many options for administering such models, such as capitation, but a core element is payment for the care of a whole patient, or at least for care of a particular condition, per unit of time, which would include specific services as well as chronic disease management and coordination of care. As originally

designed, Medicare payment to physicians for care of patients with end-stage renal disease is an example of how capitated payments can support care for a chronic condition. Set with sophisticated adjustments for health status and other important patient characteristics such as socioeconomic status, such payments could be expanded to other common chronic conditions, to signal that payers value comprehensive care rather than service quantity.

**Develop integrated care networks.** But even ideal payment structures will have desired effects only if care is organized to enable physicians to respond appropriately to new financial incentives. A payer who offers bundled payments for chronic care to a lone PCP in solo practice will likely be disappointed, because that physician's ability to influence the care delivered by other providers would be severely limited. Thus, in the long term, the ideal payment policy would foster the development of integrated care networks that allow physicians to more seamlessly coordinate care. The more concrete the professional, financial, and legal connections among physicians within these structures, the more potential they would have to align incentives and infrastructure to produce high-quality, coordinated care.

**Use of the "medical home" concept.** The concept of the "medical home" has reemerged since its introduction by the American Academy of Pediatrics nearly two decades ago.<sup>38</sup> As currently conceptualized, it would consist of one or more physicians in a single practice site meeting certain infrastructure criteria, who would be prospectively given responsibility for coordinating comprehensive care for a given patient and receive payment for doing so.<sup>39</sup> But the model will have limited potential to transform care delivery if payers do not find ways to also offer explicit incentives for the many providers outside of the medical home to participate in care coordination for the same patients.

If the medical home is not ideal, it might serve as a useful starting point for payers to envision the practice structure that could best perform the functions they hope to purchase. This structure might be a large multidisciplinary group of providers who can deliver comprehensive care, one with stable relationships with a narrow referral network of other providers (such as hospitals) whom they have selected on the basis of quality and cost performance and who are integrated in culture and by care processes and health IT, with the expertise and ability to measure, report, and be held accountable for the quality and cost of that care. Guided by this vision, purchasers such as Medicare might offer premium payments to physicians who already work in, or are willing to organize into, and contract directly as such entities to receive bundled payments for care of specific patients. If physicians continue to exhibit the rational responses to financial incentives evident in recent trends, then under such circumstances, less well-organized physicians would have a strong motivation to change their practice organization.

This would require a true commitment to press for long-term cultural shifts and certainly has potential pitfalls. Areas with fragmented physician markets will be at an initial disadvantage, and large provider organizations may well see their local market leverage grow along with their size. Those negative consequences could be overcome or mitigated if change were led on a national level by Medicare and followed by other payers, but perhaps not under the governance of Medicare as configured today, which seems designed to entitle all providers to income from the program regardless of their performance.<sup>40</sup> Regulatory risk and community backlash would also continue to restrain large organizations. But consistently and explicitly encouraging desirable

types of delivery systems could accelerate the most positive, naturally occurring trends in physician markets and send an unequivocal signal that payers intend to correct current, unhealthy trends in how physicians practice medicine.

**Editor's Notes** -- This work was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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### NEWS & TRENDS

#### Income gap between primary care, specialists must be addressed

Between 1995 and 2004, median compensation for primary care physicians increased 21.4 percent to \$161,816. (For family physicians, it increased 20.8 percent to \$156,011.) However, during the same period, median compensation for specialists increased 37.5 percent to \$297,000.

These statistics from the Medical Group Management Association are reported in a Feb. 20 *Annals of Internal Medicine* article that cites four reasons for the widening income gap between primary care and specialty physicians:

1. The volume of procedures is increasing more rapidly than the volume of office visits, and procedures are more highly under the Resource-Based Relative Value Scale, which determines Medicare reimbursement levels.
2. Specialists are overrepresented on the Relative Value Scale Update Committee, which advises the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on reimbursement matters.
3. Under Medicare's "sustainable growth rate" formula, when growth in physician expenditures exceeds economic growth, the difference must be subtracted from physician fees. Because most of the growth is due to procedures, primary care physicians experience fee reductions due to growth that did not benefit them.
4. Many private insurers exacerbate the income gap by reimbursing specialists at larger percentages over Medicare rates. On average, private insurers' reimbursement rates for primary care office visits were 104 percent of fee, compared with 119 percent to 120 percent of Medicare fees for surgical, diagnostic procedure and imaging.

The authors concluded, "Payment reform to narrow the income gap is essential if the United States is to maintain a healthy primary care base to its health care system."

#### Doctors' attire doesn't matter, study says

Dressing to impress apparently doesn't apply in health care, according to a recent study published in the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*. Researchers from Cooper University Hospital in New Jersey followed 1,116 patients after their visits with the physicians. To avoid bias from previous interactions, only those who were meeting the doctor for the first time were surveyed. They were asked about the physician's competence, professionalism, their sense of comfort and confidence in the physician, and whether they would return to or recommend the doctor to others. No questions referred to the provider's clothing. Researchers found identical patient satisfaction regardless of the attire of the physicians.

#### Health plan contract bill gets a second chance

Colorado legislators are debating a bill (SB 79) that could make health plan contracts fairer and more transparent.

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## Survey offers snapshot of office-based physicians

Data collected back in 2003 and 2004 by the National Center for Health Statistics paint a comprehensive picture of an office-based family physician.

About three-fourths of office-based physicians were the owner or part owner of their practice, and about two-thirds worked in group practices with two or more physicians. Roughly 43 percent were in single-specialty group practices and about 21 percent were in multispecialty group practices. About one-half were primary care physicians.

Physicians with 11 or more managed care contracts had 26 percent more office visits per week but averaged 26 percent less time with each patient compared with physicians who had one or two managed care contracts.

Office-based physicians reported an average of 73.7 office visits, 12.7 hospital visits and 11.1 telephone consultations per week. Primary care physicians averaged more encounters per week compared with other specialists.

About one in five reported using electronic health records.

Source: Hing E, Burt CW. Characteristics of office-based physicians and their practices: United States, 2003-04. Hyattsville, National Center for Health Statistics. 2007. Available online at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr\\_13/sr13\\_164](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_13/sr13_164)

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### NEWS & TRENDS

## Congress halts Medicare cuts at last hour, establishes bonus for data reporting

In what has become an end-of-the-year tradition, Congress has acted at the last hour to avert a 5-percent cut in physicians' Medicare payments. The action occurred during a late-night congressional session on Dec. 9, and while it may sound like good news, it translates into a payment freeze for physicians in 2007.

The narrowly avoided cut was the result of the flawed Medicare physician payment formula, which if not fixed permanently will result in continued cuts over the coming years and may push more doctors out of the program.

"The time is long overdue to devise a sound financing system for the Medicare program so we can avoid the struggle to preserve seniors' access to care," said AMA Board Chair Cecil Wilson, MD.

### Key measures in the bill

The legislation established a 1.5-percent bonus for physicians who choose to participate in the Physician Vc Reporting Program that begins July 2007. Under the program, physicians will be eligible for the bonus if the quality of care data to Medicare; at this stage, they do not have to meet performance targets. The exact measures have not been announced.

Some doctors believe the small bonus isn't worth the hassle of collecting and submitting performance data. "I have a good idea here but has not put much money behind it. The 1.5-percent bonus does not justify the expense required to do the quality reporting that the government wants," said Stephen C. Albrecht, MD, a family physician in Olympia, Wash., in the Dec. 12 *New York Times*.

The bill also calls on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to carry out a three-year demonstration to examine the effectiveness of the "medical home." The concept has been championed by the AAFP and the American College of Physicians, which believe that if individuals have a personal medical home through which they receive chronic and preventive medical services, they "can be assured of care that is not only accessible but also accurate, comprehensive, integrated, patient-centered, safe, scientifically valid and satisfying to both patients and their physicians," said AAFP President Rick Kellerman, MD.

"Investing in a primary-care based health care system means a healthier, more productive society," Kellerman said. "This bill includes a step in that direction and is helpful for our patients."

## CMS Bumps Pay for Point-of-Care A1C Tests

The payment physicians will receive from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for administering point-of-care A1C testing will increase this year, thanks in part to a push from the AAFP.

The payment for the test increased to a national average of \$21.06 on Jan. 1. Previously, more than half of

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## Ambulatory Medical Care Utilization Estimates for 2005

by Catharine W. Burt, Ed.D.; Linda F. McCaig, M.P.H.; and  
Elizabeth A. Rechtsteiner, M.S., Division of Health Care Statistics

### Abstract

**Objective**—This report presents statistics on ambulatory care visits to physician offices, hospital outpatient departments (OPDs), and hospital emergency departments (EDs) in the United States in 2005. Ambulatory medical care utilization is described in terms of patient, practice, facility, and visit characteristics.

**Methods**—Data from the 2005 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS) and the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS) were combined to produce averaged annual estimates of ambulatory medical care utilization.

**Results**—Patients in the United States made an estimated 1.2 billion visits to physician offices and hospital OPDs and EDs, a rate of 4.0 visits per person annually. Between 1995 and 2005, population visit rates increased by about 20% in primary care offices, surgical care offices, and OPDs; 37% in medical specialty offices; and 7% in EDs. The aging of the population has contributed to increased volume of visits because older patients have higher visit rates. Visits by patients 40–59 years of age represented about 28.5 percent in 2005, compared with 23.9 percent in 1995. Black persons had higher visit rates than white persons to hospital OPDs and EDs, but lower visit rates to office-based primary care and to surgical and medical specialists. In the ED, the visit rate for patients with no insurance was about twice that of those with private insurance; whereas for all types of office-based care, the visit rates were higher for privately insured persons than for uninsured persons. About 29.4 percent of all ambulatory care visits were for chronic diseases and 25.2 percent were for preventive care, including checkups, prenatal care, and postsurgical care. The leading treatment provided at ambulatory care visits was medicinal with 71.3 percent of all visits having one or more medications prescribed, up by 10% since 1995 when encounters with drug therapy represented 64.9 percent of all visits. In 2005, 2.4 billion medications were prescribed or administered at these visits.

**Keywords:** ambulatory care visits • diagnoses • injury • medications

### Introduction

This report presents summary information on the utilization of ambulatory medical care across physician offices and hospital emergency and outpatient departments. Physician offices are further classified by the physician specialty: primary care, surgical, and medical. The tables present total visits across all settings as well as percent distributions by setting type. Data are from NAMCS and NHAMCS, which are part of the ambulatory care component of the National Health Care Survey, a family of provider-based surveys conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics.

### Methods

Estimates of ambulatory medical care use are based on national probability provider-based surveys of visits to nonfederal office-based physicians and EDs and OPDs of nonfederal, general, and short-stay hospitals in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Individual reports are available that contain detailed methods and analyses by setting; physician



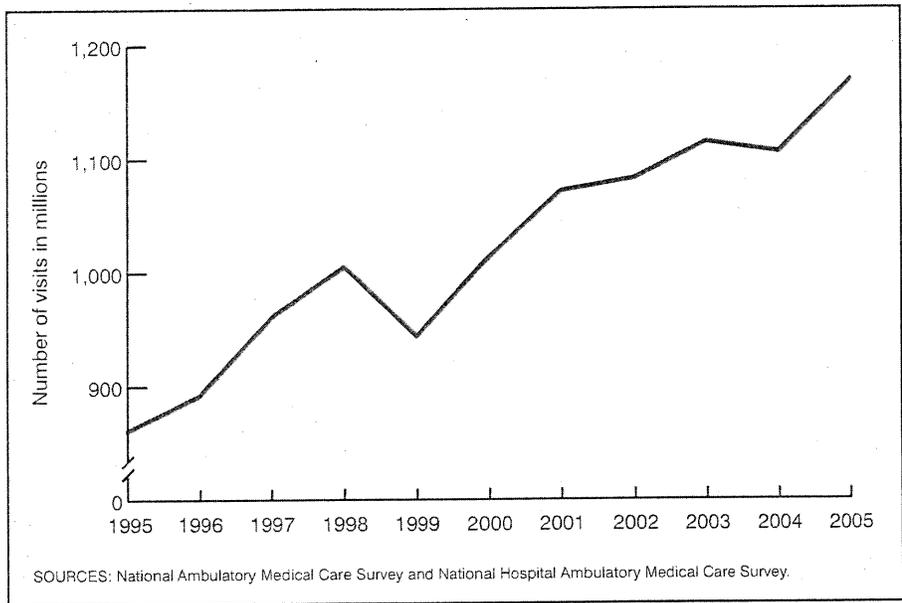


Figure 1. Trends in ambulatory care visits: United States, 1995–2005

offices (1), OPDs (2), and EDs (3). These reports, issued annually, provide a comprehensive analysis of visits to ambulatory health care settings in the United States. Estimates of visits are made from a sample of medical record abstracts from each sampled provider during defined reporting periods weighted to provide national annual estimates. More information on the sampling design and scope of the surveys can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/ahcd/ahcd1.htm>.

### Results

There were almost 1.2 billion visits to physicians' offices and hospital EDs and OPDs in the United States during 2005, up by 36% in the last 10 years (Figure 1). Between 1995 and 2005, population visit rates increased by about 20% in primary care offices, surgical care offices, and OPDs; 37% in medical specialty offices; and 7% in EDs (Figure 2).

Table 1 presents the 2005 estimates of ambulatory care by setting and patient and geographic demographics.

Table 2 presents visit rates per 100 persons in the civilian noninstitutional U.S. population. Table 3 presents the general kinds of conditions seen, whereas Table 4 presents the leading primary diagnoses for ambulatory care visits, which account for over one-half of all visits. Table 5 presents the number of medications prescribed (both new and continued) at the visits, and Table 6 presents the leading therapeutic classes of the drugs prescribed.

One-half of ambulatory medical care visits (49.0 percent) were to primary care physicians in office-based practices. The rest were to surgical specialists (17.1 percent) and medical specialists (16.3 percent) in office-based practices, and EDs (9.9 percent) and OPDs (7.7 percent) in nonfederal general and short-stay hospitals. The aging of the population has contributed to increased volume of visits because the visit rates are generally higher (excluding infants) for older patients. Visits by patients 40–59 years of age represented about 28.5 percent in 2005, compared with 23.9 percent in 1995 (Figure 3). Starting at age 50, more than one-half of visits were by patients who made three or more visits to their provider in a year and averaged more than two drug prescriptions at each visit (data not shown).

Visit rates for persons with no insurance for the care provided (i.e., expected payment from solely self-pay,

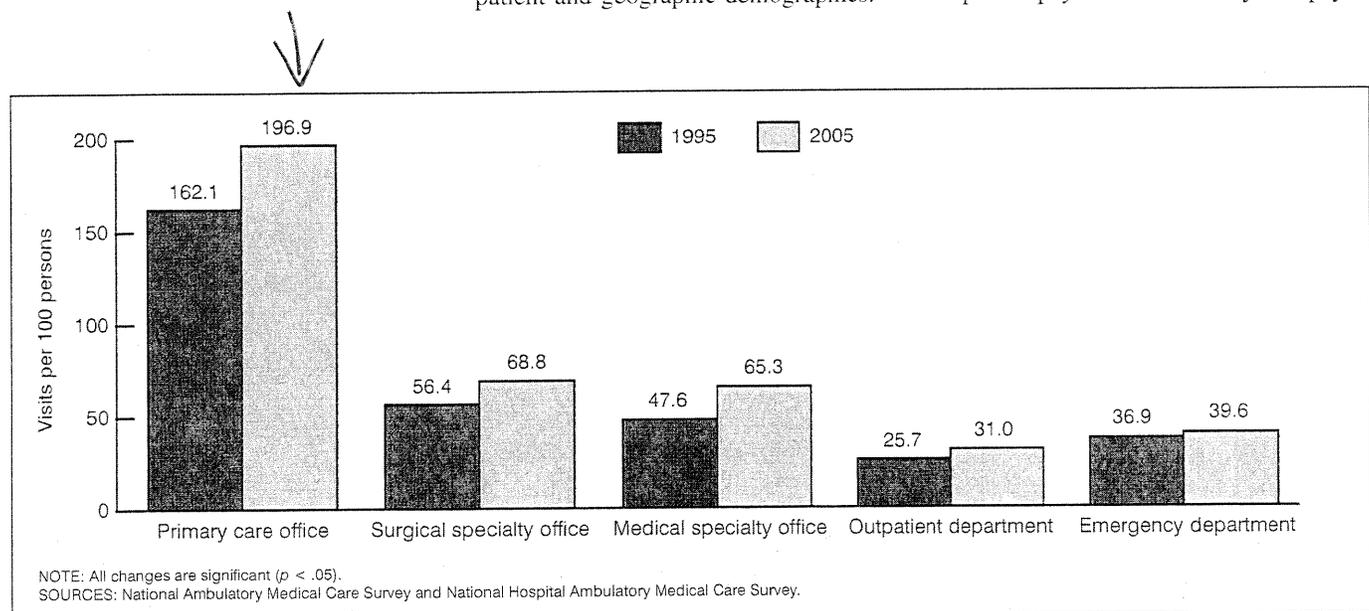


Figure 2. Visit rates by setting type: United States, 1995 and 2005

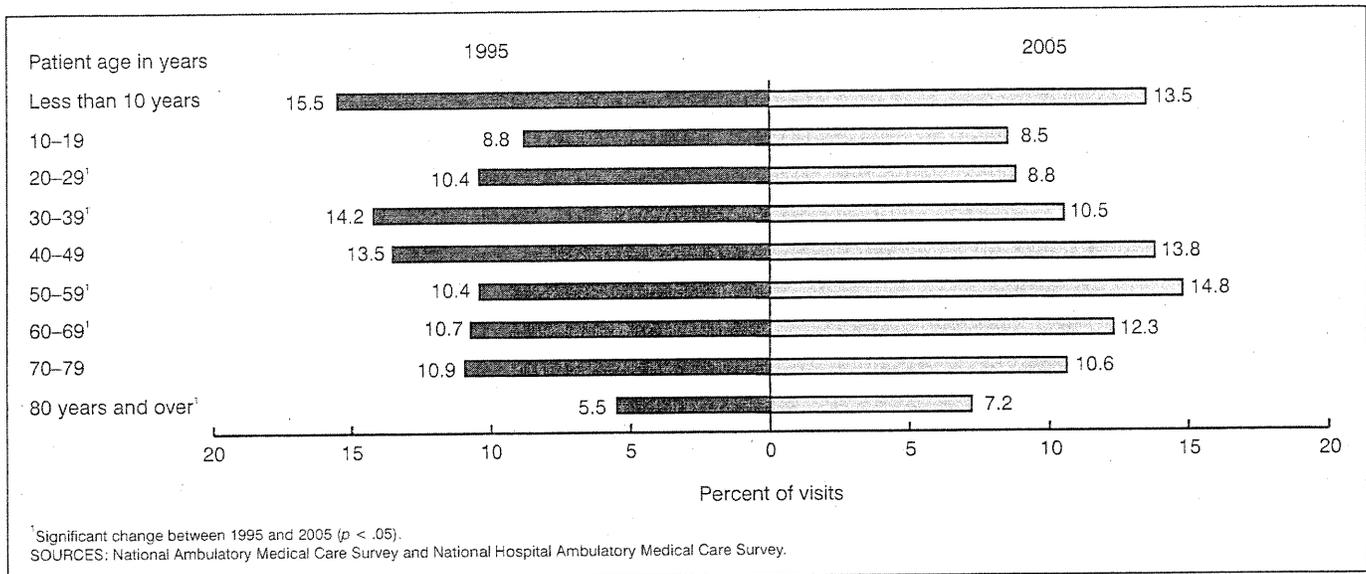


Figure 3. Percent distribution of ambulatory care visits by patient age, according to year: United States 1995 and 2005

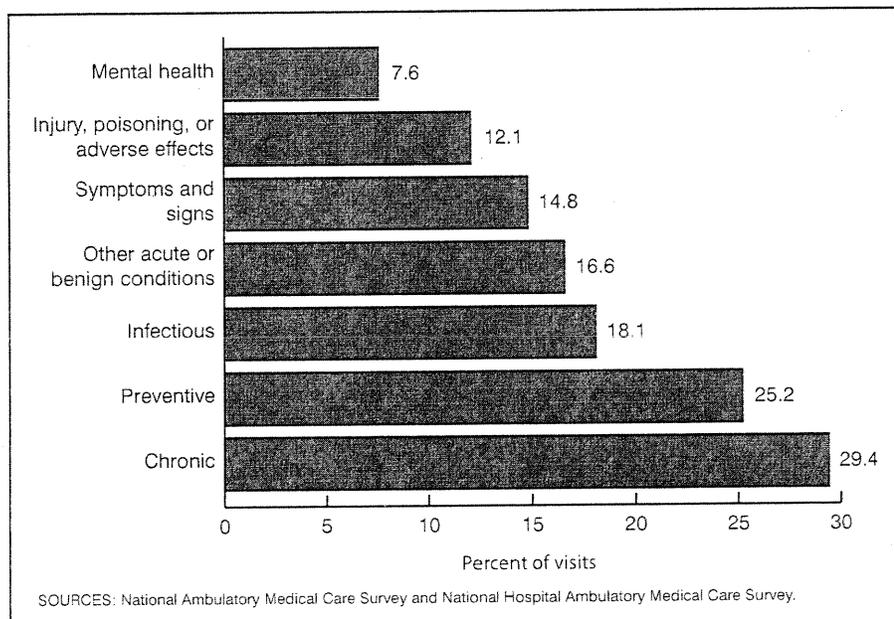


Figure 4. Percentage of ambulatory care visits by type of diseases or conditions seen: United States, 2005

checkups, prenatal care, and postsurgical care. About 18.1 percent of visits were for infectious diseases and 12.1 percent were for injuries, poisonings, or adverse effects of medical treatment (Figure 4). The types of patients' conditions varied by setting type (Table 3). EDs were relatively more likely to see injuries and infectious diseases as well as symptoms with no specific diagnosis compared with other conditions. Essential hypertension was the primary diagnosis recorded most frequently (49.2 million) at ambulatory care visits (Table 4), with over three-quarters of these occurring in primary care offices.

The leading treatment provided at ambulatory care visits was medicinal with 71.3 percent of all visits having one or more medications prescribed, up by 10% since 1995 when encounters with drug therapy represented 64.9 percent of all visits. There were 2.4 billion medications prescribed or administered at these visits, including over-the-counter medications, immunizations, allergy shots, anesthetics, and dietary supplements that were newly prescribed or continued (Table 5). Antidepressants, antihypertensives, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, hyperlipidemia drugs, and nonnarcotic analgesics were the leading drug classes prescribed, accounting for nearly one quarter

no charge, or charity) were lower for all office-based settings than visit rates for persons with various kinds of insurance. In contrast, the visit rate to EDs for the uninsured (45.9 visits per 100 persons) was about twice the rate of persons with private insurance (23.8 visits per 100 persons) (Table 2). The total visit rate for Hispanics (308.4 visits per 100 persons) was lower than that for non-Hispanics (417.4 visits per 100

persons) driven largely by difference in use of office-based physicians as opposed to hospital settings (Table 2). Similarly, black persons had higher visit rates than white persons to hospital OPDs and EDs, but lower visit rates to office-based primary care and surgical and medical specialists.

About 29.4 percent of all visits were for chronic diseases and 25.2 percent were for preventive care, including

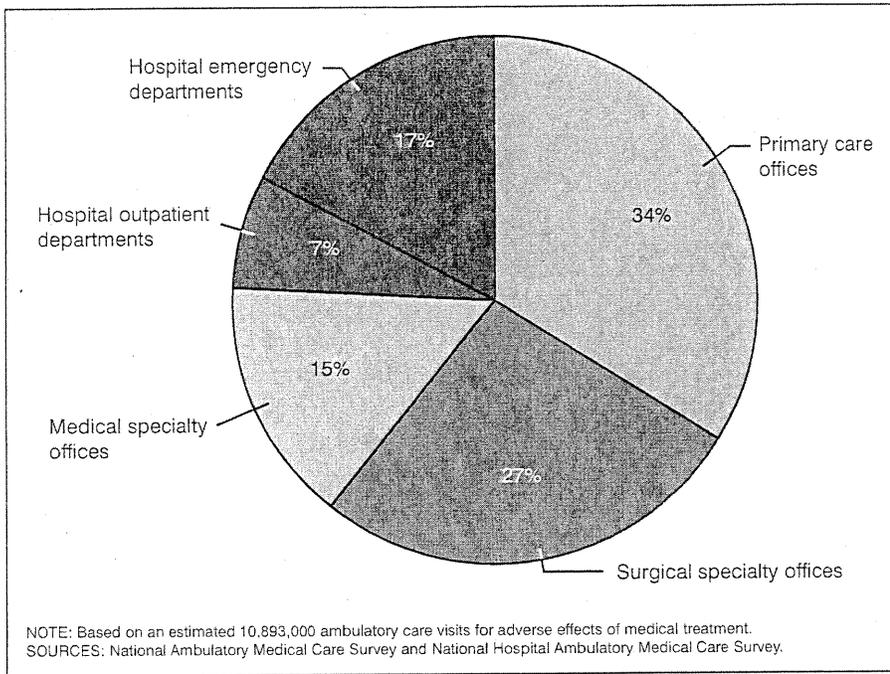


Figure 5. Percent distribution of visits for adverse effects of medical treatment by setting type: United States, 2005

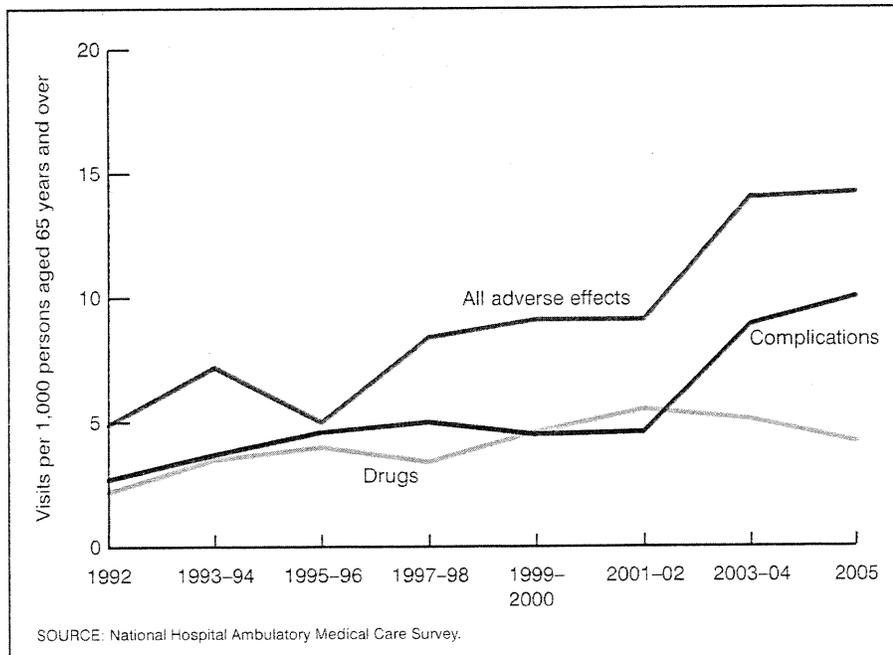


Figure 6. Trends in the rate of visits to emergency departments for adverse effects of medical treatment for persons aged 65 years and over: United States, 1992-2005

(22.9 percent) of all prescriptions (Table 6). Approximately 27.3 percent of medications prescribed or administered at ambulatory care visits in nonemergency settings were for new prescriptions, whereas 72.7 percent were

for continued prescriptions (data not shown).

A small proportion of visits were due to adverse effects of medical treatment (about 1 percent of all visits), which accounted for 10.8 million

medical encounters. These included complications from medical and surgical procedures as well as adverse drug reactions. About 17 percent of visits for adverse effects (Figure 5) were to the ED (1.8 million visits), of which 59.9 percent were for medical and surgical complications and 41.1 percent for adverse drug reactions (data not shown). Among patients aged 65 years and over, adverse effects of medical treatment represented 3.0 percent of ED visits. The rate of ED visits for adverse effects of medical treatment among seniors increased from 4.9 per 1,000 persons in 1992 to 14.2 per 1,000 persons in 2005. The rate has been increasing more for complications of procedures (e.g., surgical-site infection, postoperative bleeding), which had a fourfold increase during this time, compared with the increases in adverse drug reactions that peaked in 2001-2002 (Figure 6). Although the rate of hospital discharges with any procedures has remained fairly constant for seniors during this time frame, their average length of stay has declined by about 40 percent (4). Additionally, the rate of outpatient surgeries for seniors may have increased during this period contributing to more opportunities for complications.

Facility characteristics for physician offices and hospital EDs have been recently published. Public-use microdata visit files for 2005 are available for download from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/ahcd/ahcd1.htm>.

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Table 1. Number and percent distribution of ambulatory care visits by setting type, according to selected patient and provider characteristics: United States, 2005

Characteristic	Combined settings	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments
	Number of visits in thousands					
All visits	1,169,333	573,169	200,217	190,232	90,393	115,323
Patient age						
Under 15 years	206,158	139,048	10,444	11,059	21,109	24,497
Under 1 year	39,717	30,995	*	*	3,902	3,745
1-4 years	66,181	46,027	2,662	*1,710	6,529	9,253
5-14 years	100,260	62,026	7,233	8,823	10,678	11,500
15-24 years	99,683	48,362	10,696	11,525	10,418	18,682
25-44 years	256,656	129,253	37,017	35,349	21,805	33,232
45-64 years	328,564	148,117	66,919	68,144	23,202	22,182
65 years and over	278,272	108,389	75,140	64,154	13,859	16,730
65-74 years	133,334	52,738	35,448	30,875	7,517	6,756
75 years and over	144,938	55,651	39,692	33,280	6,341	9,974
Patient sex						
Female	677,744	336,880	109,485	113,990	55,280	62,109
Male	491,589	236,288	90,732	76,242	35,113	53,213
Patient race <sup>1</sup>						
White	984,419	488,868	176,100	167,070	66,232	86,149
Black or African American	134,917	54,487	19,217	15,226	20,764	25,223
Asian	37,618	23,131	3,310	*6,817	2,187	2,173
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*4,477	*2,740	*533	*	*347	*609
American Indian or Alaska Native	4,318	*1,917	*	*	485	786
Two or more races reported	3,584	2,026	*	*	378	*382
Patient ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino	130,064	63,387	18,415	17,102	14,289	16,872
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,039,269	509,782	181,801	173,131	76,104	98,451
Primary expected source of payment						
Private insurance	692,542	369,701	119,360	119,158	38,324	45,999
Medicare	266,062	104,118	64,797	62,741	15,223	19,184
Medicare and Medicaid	24,674	10,715	3,988	4,298	2,532	3,140
Medicaid/SCHIP <sup>2</sup>	167,413	80,071	13,539	14,990	30,151	28,661
No insurance <sup>3</sup>	69,288	23,255	10,691	9,489	6,586	19,267
Self-pay	62,875	21,044	9,225	8,902	5,277	18,426
No charge/charity	7,153	*2,465	*1,466	*	*1,408	*1,227
Worker's compensation	12,861	1,968	5,967	*2,078	870	1,977
Other	29,411	14,000	6,726	3,396	2,557	2,732
Unknown or blank	58,462	27,329	10,746	8,363	4,562	7,462
Geographic region of provider						
Northeast	235,121	107,106	39,558	40,541	25,670	22,245
Midwest	287,177	144,430	46,334	38,536	29,105	28,771
South	424,365	199,627	78,479	78,578	23,809	43,871
West	222,670	122,005	35,845	32,577	11,808	20,436
MSA <sup>4</sup> status of provider						
MSA	1,013,103	493,910	166,551	178,723	75,297	98,622
Not MSA	156,230	79,259	33,666	*11,509	*15,096	16,700

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Number and percent distribution of ambulatory care visits by setting type, according to selected patient and provider characteristics: United States, 2005—Con.

Characteristic	Combined settings	Primary care offices	Percent distribution			
			Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments
All visits . . . . .	100.0	49.0	17.1	16.3	7.7	9.9
Patient age						
Under 15 years . . . . .	100.0	67.4	5.1	5.4	10.2	11.9
Under 1 year . . . . .	100.0	78.0	*1.4	*1.3	9.8	9.4
1–4 years . . . . .	100.0	69.5	4.0	*2.6	9.9	14.0
5–14 years . . . . .	100.0	61.9	7.2	8.8	10.7	11.5
15–24 years . . . . .	100.0	48.5	10.7	11.6	10.5	18.7
25–44 years . . . . .	100.0	50.4	14.4	13.8	8.5	12.9
45–64 years . . . . .	100.0	45.1	20.4	20.7	7.1	6.8
65 years and over . . . . .	100.0	39.0	27.0	23.1	5.0	6.0
65–74 years . . . . .	100.0	39.6	26.6	23.2	5.6	5.1
75 years and over . . . . .	100.0	38.4	27.4	23.0	4.4	6.9
Patient sex						
Female . . . . .	100.0	49.7	16.2	16.8	8.2	9.2
Male . . . . .	100.0	48.1	18.5	15.5	7.1	10.8
Patient race <sup>1</sup>						
White . . . . .	100.0	49.7	17.9	17.0	6.7	8.8
Black or African American . . . . .	100.0	40.4	14.2	11.3	15.4	18.7
Asian . . . . .	100.0	61.5	8.8	*18.1	5.8	5.8
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander . . . . .	100.0	61.2	*11.9	*5.5	*7.8	*13.6
American Indian or Alaska Native . . . . .	100.0	44.4	*14.6	*11.5	11.2	18.2
Two or more races reported . . . . .	100.0	56.5	*11.8	10.4	10.5	*10.7
Patient ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino . . . . .	100.0	48.7	14.2	13.1	11.0	13.0
Not Hispanic or Latino . . . . .	100.0	49.1	17.5	16.7	7.3	9.5
Primary expected source of payment						
Private insurance . . . . .	100.0	53.4	17.2	17.2	5.5	6.6
Medicare . . . . .	100.0	39.1	24.4	23.6	5.7	7.2
Medicare and Medicaid . . . . .	100.0	43.4	16.2	17.4	10.3	12.7
Medicaid/SCHIP <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	100.0	47.8	8.1	9.0	18.0	17.1
No insurance <sup>3</sup> . . . . .	100.0	33.6	15.4	13.7	9.5	27.8
Self-pay . . . . .	100.0	33.5	14.7	14.2	8.4	29.3
No charge/charity . . . . .	100.0	*34.5	*20.5	*8.2	*19.7	*17.2
Worker's compensation . . . . .	100.0	15.3	46.4	*16.2	6.8	15.4
Other . . . . .	100.0	47.6	22.9	11.5	8.7	9.3
Unknown or blank . . . . .	100.0	46.7	18.4	14.3	7.8	12.8
Geographic region of provider						
Northeast . . . . .	100.0	45.6	16.8	17.2	10.9	9.5
Midwest . . . . .	100.0	50.3	16.1	13.4	10.1	10.0
South . . . . .	100.0	47.0	18.5	18.5	5.6	10.3
West . . . . .	100.0	54.8	16.1	14.6	5.3	9.2
MSA <sup>4</sup> status of provider						
MSA . . . . .	100.0	48.8	16.4	17.6	7.4	9.7
Not MSA . . . . .	100.0	50.7	21.5	*7.4	*9.7	10.7

\* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

<sup>1</sup>The race groups, White, Black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and multiple races, include persons of Hispanic and not Hispanic origin. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Starting with data year 1999, race-specific estimates have been tabulated according to 1997 Standards for Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity and are not strictly comparable with estimates for earlier years. The percentage of visit records with multiple races indicated is small and lower than is typically found for self-reported race in household surveys.<sup>2</sup>SCHIP is State Children's Health Insurance Program.<sup>3</sup>No insurance is defined as having only self-pay, no charge, or charity as payment sources.<sup>4</sup>MSA is metropolitan statistical area.

Table 2. Rate of ambulatory care visits with corresponding standard errors, by setting type, and selected patient and provider characteristics: United States, 2005

Characteristic	Combined settings	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments
	Number of visits per 100 persons <sup>1,2,3</sup>					
All visits . . . . .	401.6	196.9	68.8	65.3	31.0	39.6
Patient age						
Under 15 years . . . . .	339.9	229.3	17.2	18.2	34.8	40.4
Under 1 year . . . . .	968.0	755.4	*13.4	*12.8	95.1	91.3
1–4 years . . . . .	408.7	284.2	16.4	*10.6	40.3	57.1
5–14 years . . . . .	248.5	153.7	17.9	21.9	26.5	28.5
15–24 years . . . . .	243.0	117.9	26.1	28.1	25.4	45.5
25–44 years . . . . .	313.0	157.6	45.1	43.1	26.6	40.5
45–64 years . . . . .	454.2	204.7	92.5	94.2	32.1	30.7
65 years and over . . . . .	791.7	308.4	213.8	182.5	39.4	47.6
65–74 years . . . . .	724.8	286.7	192.7	167.8	40.9	36.7
75 years and over . . . . .	865.1	332.2	236.9	198.6	37.9	59.5
Patient sex						
Female . . . . .	455.7	226.5	73.6	76.7	37.2	41.8
Male . . . . .	345.1	165.9	63.7	53.5	24.7	37.4
Patient race <sup>4</sup>						
White . . . . .	420.4	208.8	75.2	71.4	28.3	36.8
Black or African American . . . . .	369.2	149.1	52.6	41.7	56.8	69.0
Asian . . . . .	298.2	183.3	26.2	*54.0	17.3	17.2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander . . . . .	*881.9	*539.7	*105.0	*48.7	*68.4	*120.1
American Indian or Alaska Native . . . . .	153.7	*68.2	*22.5	*17.7	17.3	28.0
Two or more races reported . . . . .	79.2	44.8	*9.4	8.3	8.3	*8.4
Patient ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino . . . . .	308.4	150.3	43.7	40.6	33.9	40.0
Not Hispanic or Latino . . . . .	417.4	204.7	73.0	69.5	30.6	39.5
Primary expected source of payment						
Private insurance . . . . .	357.8	191.0	61.7	61.6	19.8	23.8
Medicare . . . . .	706.8	276.6	172.1	166.7	40.4	51.0
Medicaid/SCHIP <sup>5</sup> . . . . .	522.4	249.8	42.2	46.8	94.1	89.4
No insurance <sup>6</sup> . . . . .	165.2	55.5	25.5	22.6	15.7	45.9
Geographic region of provider						
Northeast . . . . .	436.9	199.0	73.5	75.3	47.7	41.3
Midwest . . . . .	442.1	222.3	71.3	59.3	44.8	44.3
South . . . . .	403.3	189.7	74.6	74.7	22.6	41.7
West . . . . .	331.5	181.6	53.4	48.5	17.6	30.4
MSA <sup>7</sup> status of provider						
MSA . . . . .	412.8	201.2	67.9	72.8	30.7	40.2
Not MSA . . . . .	341.8	173.4	73.6	*25.2	*33.0	36.5

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Rate of ambulatory care visits with corresponding standard errors, by setting type, and selected patient and provider characteristics: United States, 2005—Con.

Characteristic	Combined settings	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments
			Standard error of rate			
All visits . . . . .	15.1	10.7	4.9	5.0	3.0	1.9
Patient age						
Under 15 years . . . . .	20.5	19.2	2.2	4.4	5.0	3.2
Under 1 year . . . . .	88.3	83.7	4.7	6.0	15.9	7.3
1–4 years . . . . .	29.6	28.5	2.9	4.5	6.1	5.1
5–14 years . . . . .	13.2	11.7	2.3	4.7	3.7	2.2
15–24 years . . . . .	11.0	8.6	2.9	3.2	2.6	2.3
25–44 years . . . . .	13.6	10.6	3.7	4.0	2.7	1.9
45–64 years . . . . .	20.2	15.3	7.1	7.5	3.2	1.4
65 years and over . . . . .	45.0	27.3	19.0	19.7	4.7	2.2
65–74 years . . . . .	41.4	25.1	17.4	19.6	4.9	1.9
75 years and over . . . . .	54.1	33.8	22.5	22.4	4.7	3.0
Patient sex						
Female . . . . .	17.5	12.3	5.3	6.3	3.6	2.0
Male . . . . .	13.8	10.5	5.0	4.1	2.4	1.8
Patient race <sup>4</sup>						
White . . . . .	16.6	11.9	5.5	5.4	3.0	1.9
Black or African American . . . . .	24.1	17.5	7.1	6.5	8.0	4.9
Asian . . . . .	43.0	37.9	3.7	18.8	2.5	3.1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander . . . . .	295.0	259.2	46.5	30.1	25.1	53.1
American Indian or Alaska Native . . . . .	30.1	22.6	7.3	6.1	4.7	8.1
Two or more races reported . . . . .	10.2	8.0	3.1	2.0	2.5	3.2
Patient ethnicity						
Hispanic or Latino . . . . .	26.4	16.5	5.9	7.4	4.8	4.8
Not Hispanic or Latino . . . . .	16.1	11.9	5.3	5.3	3.1	1.9
Primary expected source of payment						
Private insurance . . . . .	15.1	11.8	5.0	4.9	2.4	1.2
Medicare . . . . .	42.0	25.4	15.7	19.7	4.7	2.7
Medicaid/SCHIP <sup>5</sup> . . . . .	30.0	24.0	5.5	6.2	11.9	6.0
No insurance <sup>6</sup> . . . . .	10.7	7.3	6.2	3.3	2.0	3.4
Geographic region of provider						
Northeast . . . . .	27.1	21.5	10.9	10.9	9.3	3.9
Midwest . . . . .	36.5	26.9	8.3	11.8	7.6	4.6
South . . . . .	30.1	19.9	10.5	9.9	3.7	3.7
West . . . . .	28.1	19.8	5.4	5.3	4.7	2.2
MSA <sup>7</sup> status of provider						
MSA . . . . .	18.0	12.2	5.2	5.7	3.1	2.2
Not MSA . . . . .	46.1	30.2	14.3	9.7	10.7	4.7

\* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

<sup>1</sup>Visit rates for age, sex, race, and region are based on the July 1, 2005, set of estimates of the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States as developed by the Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>2</sup>Population estimates of metropolitan statistical area status are based on data from the 2005 National Health Interview Survey, National Center for Health Statistics, adjusted to the U.S. Census Bureau definition of core-based statistical areas as of November 2004. See <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/metrodef.html> for more about metropolitan statistical definitions.

<sup>3</sup>Population estimates for expected source of payment are based on data from the 2005 National Health Interview Survey.

<sup>4</sup>The race groups, White, Black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and multiple races, include persons of Hispanic and not Hispanic origin. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Starting with data year 1999, race-specific estimates have been tabulated according to 1997 Standards for Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity and are not strictly comparable with estimates for earlier years. The percentage of visit records with multiple races indicated is small and lower than is typically found for self-reported race in household surveys.

<sup>5</sup>SCHIP is State Children's Health Insurance Program.

<sup>6</sup>No insurance is defined as having only self-pay, no charge, or charity as payment sources.

<sup>7</sup>MSA is metropolitan statistical area.

Table 3. Number and percentage of visits for type of condition by type of ambulatory care setting: United States, 2005

Type of condition <sup>1</sup>	Number of visits in thousands <sup>2</sup>	Percent of visits	Total	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments	Percent distribution					
All visits	1,169,333	...	100.0	49.0	17.1	16.3	7.7	9.9						
Chronic	343,966	29.4	100.0	53.7	12.3	22.7	7.0	4.5						
Preventive	294,868	25.2	100.0	58.2	20.6	9.6	8.8	2.8						
Infectious	211,654	18.1	100.0	65.0	6.1	6.6	8.8	13.6						
Other acute or benign conditions <sup>3</sup>	194,505	16.6	100.0	33.2	32.6	20.7	6.2	7.3						
Symptoms and signs	173,171	14.8	100.0	52.2	8.4	14.1	7.0	18.3						
Injury, poisoning, or adverse effects	141,169	12.1	100.0	31.2	24.0	8.2	7.0	29.7						
Mental health	88,344	7.6	100.0	44.8	1.4	36.1	10.7	7.0						
					Standard error									
All conditions	43,828	...	...	1.6	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.5						
Chronic	19,046	1.0	...	2.4	1.2	2.3	0.8	0.3						
Preventive	16,536	0.9	...	2.0	1.7	1.0	1.1	0.2						
Infectious	9,995	0.6	...	1.9	0.6	0.9	1.1	0.9						
Other acute or benign conditions <sup>3</sup>	8,789	0.5	...	2.0	1.9	1.6	0.6	0.5						
Symptoms and signs	8,047	0.5	...	2.1	0.9	1.2	0.8	1.1						
Injury, poisoning, or adverse effects	6,441	0.4	...	2.4	2.2	1.4	0.9	1.4						
Mental health	5,576	0.4	...	3.2	0.3	3.1	1.6	0.6						

... Category not applicable.

<sup>1</sup>Based on any of 3 diagnoses recorded at the visit, coded to the *International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM)*. For related ICD-9-CM codes see <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/ahcd/ahcd1.htm>.

<sup>2</sup>Sum will not add to total because more than one type of diagnosis may be reported per visit.

<sup>3</sup>Includes benign neoplasms; problems related to pregnancy, delivery, and reproductive health; and conditions that are not considered infectious or chronic, such as gastroenteritis, glaucoma, and cataracts.

Table 4. Number and percent distribution of ambulatory care visits with corresponding standard errors, by primary diagnosis group, with percent distribution by setting type: United States, 2005

Primary diagnosis group and International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM) code(s) <sup>1</sup>	Number of visits in thousands	Percent distribution	Total	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments
All visits	1,169,333	100.0	100.0	49.0	17.1	16.3	7.7	9.9
Essential hypertension	49,216	4.2	100.0	77.6	*0.5	12.7	7.9	1.3
Routine infant or child health check	45,487	3.9	100.0	91.8	*0.0	*0.1	7.9	0.1
Acute upper respiratory infections, excluding pharyngitis	460-461,463-466	3.8	100.0	74.7	2.0	*5.7	8.0	9.8
Arthropathies and related disorders	710-719	3.2	100.0	31.5	33.3	26.7	4.7	3.9
Malignant neoplasms	140-208,230-234	2.6	100.0	*9.2	20.0	65.8	*4.5	0.5
Diabetes mellitus	28,601	2.4	100.0	57.4	*16.0	*15.6	9.6	1.4
Spinal disorders	21,753	2.4	100.0	51.2	19.5	11.2	7.6	10.5
Rheumatism, excluding back	27.4	1.9	100.0	45.6	27.4	11.8	6.8	8.4
Specific procedures and aftercare	725-729	1.6	100.0	46.4	26.4	10.9	10.5	5.8
Normal pregnancy	V22	1.6	100.0	83.9	-	*0.3	14.6	1.1
Otitis media and eustachian tube disorders	381-382	1.6	100.0	65.8	12.3	*0.7	9.1	12.1
General medical examination	V70	1.5	100.0	89.2	*2.4	*2.5	4.7	*1.2
Follow up examination	V67	1.5	100.0	28.7	56.2	*10.0	4.6	*0.5
Gynecological examination	V72.3	1.4	100.0	92.2	-	*0.2	7.6	*0.0
Asthma	391-392,0,393-398,402,404,415-416,420-429	1.4	100.0	56.5	*0.2	*23.9	8.2	11.1
Heart disease, excluding ischemic	404,415-416,420-429	1.2	100.0	31.9	*1.8	45.5	*10.0	10.8
Chronic sinusitis	473	1.2	100.0	74.9	8.3	*4.4	8.4	4.1
Acute pharyngitis	462	1.2	100.0	78.5	*0.4	*0.6	9.1	11.5
Disorders of lipid metabolism	272	1.2	100.0	83.5	*3.6	*6.7	6.1	*0.0
Allergic rhinitis	477	1.0	100.0	48.6	*19.3	*25.1	6.3	0.7
Psychoses, excluding major depressive disorder	290-295,296.0-296.1,296.4-299	1.0	100.0	*10.6	*0.2	66.8	14.3	8.1
Benign neoplasms	210-229,235-239	1.0	100.0	28.8	18.0	47.7	5.0	0.7
Abdominal pain	789	0.9	100.0	40.3	5.5	*5.2	7.1	41.9
Chronic and unspecified bronchitis	490-491	0.9	100.0	69.7	*1.7	*4.8	8.3	15.4
Ischemic heart disease	410-414.9	0.9	100.0	31.4	*7.9	51.0	*4.6	5.1
Potential health hazards related to personal and family history	V10-V19	0.9	100.0	34.5	22.0	29.0	11.8	2.6
Artificial opening and other postsurgical status	V44-V45	0.9	100.0	*9.2	74.7	*9.8	*5.9	*0.5
Chest pain	786.5	0.9	100.0	29.0	*0.4	22.8	3.9	44.0
Glaucoma	365	0.8	100.0	-	97.4	-	*2.6	-
Major depressive disorder	296.2-296.3	0.8	100.0	*5.7	-	80.1	*12.0	2.2
Sprains and strains, excluding ankle and back	840-844,845.1,848	0.8	100.0	36.9	26.8	*2.6	7.5	26.2
Contusion with intact skin surface	920-924	0.8	100.0	36.8	*4.8	*1.5	6.6	50.4
Contact dermatitis and other eczema	692	0.8	100.0	62.3	*3.2	22.0	6.4	6.0
Cataract	366	0.8	100.0	*3.2	94.6	-	*2.2	*0.0
Open wound, excluding head	874-897	0.7	100.0	27.6	13.3	*2.2	8.7	48.2
All other diagnoses		46.3	100.0	43.8	19.7	15.8	7.9	12.8

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 4. Number and percent distribution of ambulatory care visits with corresponding standard errors, by primary diagnosis group, with percent distribution by setting type: United States, 2005—Con.

Primary diagnosis group and International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM) code(s) <sup>1</sup>	Number of visits in thousands	Percent distribution	Total	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments
All visits	43,828	...	...	1.6	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.5
Essential hypertension	4,447	0.3	...	2.7	0.3	2.4	1.2	0.2
Routine infant or child health check	4,152	0.3	...	1.5	0.0	0.1	1.5	0.0
Acute upper respiratory infections, excluding pharyngitis	2,987	0.2	...	2.4	0.5	1.7	1.3	0.9
Arthropathies and related disorders	4,246	0.3	...	4.5	5.3	7.8	0.8	0.5
Malignant neoplasms	5,642	0.5	...	2.9	4.9	7.7	1.4	0.1
Diabetes mellitus	2,772	0.2	...	5.5	5.2	4.8	1.5	0.2
Spinal disorders	2,538	0.2	...	4.1	3.7	4.2	1.2	1.1
Rheumatism, excluding back	1,599	0.1	...	3.9	3.5	3.0	1.3	0.8
Specific procedures and aftercare	2,096	0.2	...	5.3	4.3	2.5	2.2	0.9
Normal pregnancy	2,566	0.2	...	3.0	...	0.3	2.9	0.3
Otitis media and eustachian tube disorders	1,497	0.1	...	3.8	2.1	0.7	1.7	1.6
General medical examination	2,400	0.2	...	2.0	1.0	1.1	1.0	0.4
Follow up examination	2,620	0.2	...	5.5	5.9	3.5	1.2	0.2
Gynecological examination	2,397	0.2	...	1.6	...	0.2	1.5	0.0
Asthma	2,127	0.2	...	7.9	0.2	9.9	1.5	1.7
Heart disease, excluding ischemic	1,585	0.1	...	4.6	1.5	5.6	3.4	1.5
Chronic sinusitis	1,319	0.1	...	3.0	1.6	1.7	1.8	0.5
Acute pharyngitis	1,970	0.2	...	3.5	0.2	0.5	2.2	1.9
Disorders of lipid metabolism	1,436	0.1	...	3.6	2.7	2.5	1.3	0.0
Allergic rhinitis	2,080	0.2	...	8.6	8.6	10.1	1.7	0.2
Psychoses, excluding major depressive disorder	1,465	0.1	...	3.3	0.2	4.6	3.2	1.3
Benign neoplasms	1,649	0.1	...	3.9	3.7	5.1	1.2	0.2
Abdominal pain	878	0.1	...	3.8	1.3	2.3	1.2	3.4
Chronic and unspecified bronchitis	1,071	0.1	...	3.9	1.0	2.0	1.8	2.0
Ischemic heart disease	1,225	0.1	...	5.3	4.1	6.3	1.5	0.8
Potential health hazards related to personal and family history	1,120	0.1	...	4.8	3.1	6.0	2.5	0.5
Artificial opening and other postsurgical status	1,989	0.2	...	2.8	5.7	3.5	2.0	0.2
Chest pain	766	0.1	...	4.0	0.3	4.2	0.9	3.7
Glaucoma	2,498	0.2	...	...	0.9	...	0.9	...
Major depressive disorder	1,560	0.1	...	2.4	...	4.7	3.8	0.6
Sprains and strains, excluding ankle and back	904	0.1	...	5.2	5.7	1.4	1.7	3.1
Contusion with intact skin surface	718	0.1	...	4.4	1.8	1.1	1.3	3.9
Contact dermatitis and other eczema	899	0.1	...	3.9	1.1	3.1	1.0	0.9
Cataract	1,515	0.1	...	1.5	1.7	...	0.7	0.0
Open wound, excluding head	641	0.1	...	3.5	3.3	1.1	1.6	3.3
All other diagnoses	20,616	0.6	...	1.8	1.3	0.9	0.7	0.6

Standard error of percent

Standard error in thousands

\* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

0.0 Quantity more than zero but less than 0.05.

- Quantity zero.

... Category not applicable.

<sup>1</sup>Based on the International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification. However, certain codes have been combined in this table to form larger categories that better describe the utilization of ambulatory care services.

Table 5. Number and percent distribution of drug visits and drug mentions, and percentage of drug visits and drug mention rates per 100 visits with corresponding standard errors, in ambulatory care visits by setting type: United States, 2005

	Drug visits <sup>1</sup>				Drug mentions <sup>2</sup>				Percent drug visits <sup>3</sup>			Drug mention rates <sup>4</sup>	
	Number in thousands	Standard error in thousands	Percent distribution	Standard error of percent	Number in thousands	Standard error in thousands	Percent distribution	Standard error of percent	Percent	Standard error of percent	Number of drug mentions per 100 visits	Standard error of rate	
Ambulatory care setting													
All ambulatory care settings . . . . .	833,332	33,022	100.0	...	2,430,234	132,154	100.0	...	71.3	1.0	207.8	6.8	
Primary care offices . . . . .	435,163	25,473	52.2	1.7	1,278,291	102,220	52.6	2.3	75.9	1.4	223.0	10.3	
Medical specialty offices . . . . .	153,402	12,465	18.4	1.3	532,091	55,554	21.9	1.9	80.6	1.6	279.7	15.9	
Surgical specialty offices . . . . .	90,684	8,076	10.9	0.9	220,422	25,029	9.1	1.0	45.3	2.1	110.1	8.1	
Hospital outpatient departments . . . . .	65,686	6,752	7.9	0.8	194,579	23,501	8.0	1.0	72.6	1.6	215.3	12.1	
Hospital emergency departments . . . . .	88,497	4,335	10.6	0.6	204,851	10,652	8.4	0.6	76.7	0.8	177.6	3.5	

... Category not applicable.  
<sup>1</sup>Visits at which one or more drugs were provided or prescribed by the provider.  
<sup>2</sup>Number of drugs mentioned at visit (up to eight per visit).  
<sup>3</sup>Percentage of visits that included one or more drug mentions (number of drug visits divided by number of visits multiplied by 100).  
<sup>4</sup>Average number of drugs that were mentioned per 100 visits (number of drug mentions divided by total number of visits multiplied by 100).  
 NOTE: Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

Table 6. Number and rate of drug mentions for the 20 most frequently occurring therapeutic classes at ambulatory care visits and percent distribution by setting type, with corresponding standard errors: United States, 2005

Therapeutic class <sup>1</sup>	Number of occurrences in thousands <sup>2</sup>	Number of occurrences per 100 drug mentions <sup>3</sup>	Total	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments
All occurrences . . . . .	2,820,765	116.1	100.0	52.4	9.0	21.5	7.9	9.2
Antidepressants . . . . .	117,813	4.8	100.0	48.6	4.4	37.9	8.4	0.7
Antihypertensive agents . . . . .	113,078	4.7	100.0	62.5	8.5	22.1	6.1	0.8
NSAIDs <sup>4</sup> . . . . .	110,014	4.5	100.0	45.8	10.4	12.2	7.9	23.7
Hyperlipidemia . . . . .	109,650	4.5	100.0	59.1	9.0	24.0	7.4	0.5
Nonnarcotic analgesics . . . . .	107,589	4.4	100.0	52.4	6.7	18.5	8.4	13.9
Antiasthmatics or bronchodilators . . . . .	100,273	4.1	100.0	58.9	4.6	20.1	8.7	7.8
Antipyretics . . . . .	97,442	4.0	100.0	52.4	6.5	18.4	8.5	14.1
Anarthritics . . . . .	94,933	3.9	100.0	53.7	11.0	25.4	6.5	3.5
Narcotic analgesics . . . . .	94,181	3.9	100.0	34.6	11.8	12.0	6.7	34.9
Acid or peptic disorders . . . . .	88,764	3.7	100.0	52.5	8.0	24.3	8.2	6.9
Antihistamines . . . . .	84,599	3.5	100.0	58.4	4.5	14.5	7.3	15.3
Blood glucose regulators . . . . .	81,515	3.4	100.0	57.5	8.4	23.1	9.0	2.0
Vitamins or minerals . . . . .	74,508	3.1	100.0	56.5	10.9	21.2	10.1	1.3
Vaccines or antisera . . . . .	72,097	3.0	100.0	82.7	0.3	1.8	10.1	5.0
Beta blockers . . . . .	69,821	2.9	100.0	53.3	8.0	28.5	8.4	1.8
Diuretics . . . . .	66,595	2.7	100.0	54.7	8.6	24.8	9.1	2.8
ACE inhibitors <sup>5</sup> . . . . .	65,728	2.7	100.0	60.5	7.7	22.3	8.5	1.0
Calcium channel blockers . . . . .	53,742	2.2	100.0	62.0	5.9	23.5	7.1	1.5
Adrenal corticosteroids . . . . .	52,329	2.2	100.0	46.9	10.2	24.7	6.7	11.6
Thyroid or antithyroid . . . . .	44,847	1.8	100.0	55.9	8.5	28.7	6.4	0.5

Percent distribution

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 6. Number and rate of drug mentions for the 20 most frequently occurring therapeutic classes at ambulatory care visits and percent distribution by setting type, with corresponding standard errors: United States, 2005—Con.

Therapeutic class <sup>1</sup>	Number of occurrences in thousands <sup>2</sup>	Number of occurrences per 100 drug mentions <sup>3</sup>	Total	Primary care offices	Surgical specialty offices	Medical specialty offices	Hospital outpatient departments	Hospital emergency departments	Standard error of percent	
									Standard error in thousands	Standard error of rate
All occurrences	154,987	0.4	...	2.3	1.0	1.9	1.0	0.6	1.0	0.6
Antidepressants	9,108	0.2	...	3.4	0.7	3.2	1.5	0.1	1.5	0.1
Antihypertensive agents	9,661	0.2	...	3.1	1.4	2.6	1.1	0.1	1.1	0.1
NSAIDs <sup>4</sup>	6,680	0.2	...	3.0	1.6	2.5	1.0	1.6	1.0	1.6
Hyperlipidemia	8,770	0.2	...	3.0	1.7	2.8	1.3	0.1	1.3	0.1
Nonnarcotic analgesics	6,975	0.2	...	3.0	1.1	2.2	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1
Antiasthmatics or bronchodilators	7,209	0.2	...	3.8	0.8	4.1	1.2	0.7	1.2	0.7
Antipyretics	6,734	0.2	...	3.1	1.1	2.2	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.1
Antiarrhythmics	7,874	0.2	...	3.6	1.7	3.5	1.2	0.4	1.2	0.4
Narcotic analgesics	6,437	0.2	...	3.5	1.7	1.7	0.9	2.4	0.9	2.4
Acid or peptic disorders	6,699	0.1	...	3.3	1.1	3.4	1.3	0.7	1.3	0.7
Antihistamines	4,719	0.1	...	3.0	0.7	2.1	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1
Blood glucose regulators	6,657	0.2	...	3.7	2.1	3.6	1.3	0.3	1.3	0.3
Vitamins or minerals	5,161	0.2	...	3.6	2.0	2.7	1.8	0.2	1.8	0.2
Vaccines or antisera	7,854	0.3	...	2.5	0.1	0.8	2.1	0.6	2.1	0.6
Beta blockers	5,451	0.1	...	3.1	1.5	2.9	1.5	0.2	1.5	0.2
Diuretics	5,657	0.1	...	3.5	1.7	3.1	1.7	0.3	1.7	0.3
ACE inhibitors <sup>5</sup>	5,223	0.1	...	3.1	1.5	2.6	1.4	0.2	1.4	0.2
Calcium channel blockers	4,383	0.1	...	3.2	1.0	2.9	1.3	0.2	1.3	0.2
Adrenal corticosteroids	3,732	0.1	...	3.3	2.3	3.8	1.0	1.1	2.3	1.1
Thyroid or antithyroid	4,303	0.1	...	4.0	2.2	4.2	1.2	0.1	2.2	0.1

\* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

... Category not applicable.

<sup>1</sup>Based on the standard four-digit drug classification used in the *National Drug Code Directory*, 1995 edition.

<sup>2</sup>Total of all therapeutic classes will exceed total number of drug mentions because up to three classes may be coded for each drug.

<sup>3</sup>Based on an estimated 2,430,234,000 drug mentions at ambulatory care visits (up to eight per visit) in 2005.

<sup>4</sup>NSAIDs are nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

<sup>5</sup>ACE is angiotensin-converting enzyme.

NOTE: Numbers may not add to totals because of rounding.

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**Suggested citation**

Burt CW, McCaig LF, Rechtsteiner EA. Ambulatory medical care utilization estimates for 2005. Advance data from vital and health statistics; no 388. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2007.

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CS111267 (6/2007)  
T28628  
DHHS Publication No. (PHS) 2007-1250