

Survey: Majority of Americans Want Physicians Handling Their Health Care

Nearly three in four Americans say they prefer physicians to nonphysicians, such as nurse practitioners, when it comes to health care, and nearly nine in 10 say they want a physician leading their health care team, according to results from a survey commissioned by the American Academy of Family Physicians. The survey, which was conducted online and included responses from more than 1,300 U.S. adults, asked consumers a series of questions about health care topics, including who they most often see for their health care, who they would prefer if given the choice, and what characteristics they would ascribe to various health care professionals. Survey respondents also were asked which health care professional was their “first call” when a medical question arose; 41% chose a primary care physician, 24% chose a physician, 8% chose a subspecialist, 6% chose a nurse practitioner, and 3% chose a physician assistant. In addition, 70% said they were less likely to vote for a state representative who supported legislation that would restrict their ability to continue seeing their physician. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/practice-professional-issues/20131218ipossurvey.html>.

Physician Groups Urge Congress to Extend Medicaid-Medicare Parity Program

Several physician groups have asked Congress to extend a program increasing payments for primary care services covered by Medicaid. The program, which was announced in 2012 as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, was designed to bring Medicaid payments for certain primary care services up to at least Medicare levels. However, many states were not ready to implement it at the time, and some physicians have yet to receive the higher payments. The American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Physicians, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and American Osteopathic Association want Congress to extend the program for two years so that it can be more effectively evaluated. The organizations said that improving access to physicians for Medicaid patients will lead to better care and decreased costs, and noted that many physicians currently do not accept Medicaid because the payment rate is below the cost of providing care. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/government-medicine/20131216parityltr.html>.

Patients Get Early Look at Rates of MRSA and *C. difficile* Infection Among Hospitals

New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Healthcare Safety Network give patients a first look at how well hospitals are preventing *Clostridium difficile* and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infections. This information, in addition to other indicators of hospital performance, is collected as part of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ Hospital Inpatient Quality Reporting Program and is publicly available on the Hospital Compare website (<http://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare>). The website reflects only hospital-onset infections; patients whose infections arose outside of the hospital are not included in the infection counts for the quality measure. Major teaching hospitals, those with more than 400 beds, and those with high community-onset infection rates have the highest risk of *C. difficile* and MRSA infections, which is taken into account when the clinical quality measure is calculated. The data represent only the first quarter of 2013; subsequent measurements will be more precise and will provide a more complete picture as information is collected over time. The next update, which will represent six months of data, is scheduled for April 2014. For more information, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2013/p1212-mrsa-cdifficile.html>.

FDA Extends Deadline for Comments on Proposal to Reclassify *Trans* Fats

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has extended the comment period for a preliminary rule that stands to severely restrict food manufacturers’ ability to market foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils. In November 2013, the FDA announced its preliminary determination that partially hydrogenated oils, the primary dietary source of *trans* fat in processed foods, are not “generally recognized as safe” for use in food and should be reclassified as food additives. If the change is finalized, food manufacturers would no longer be permitted to market partially hydrogenated oils without prior approval from the FDA. The deadline for submission of comments is March 8, 2014. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news-now/government-medicine/20131231transfatltr.html>.

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