Consumer and Patient Perspectives and Satisfaction with Medical Care Provided by Physician Assistants

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Background
- The physician assistant (PA) profession continues to grow, and PA contributions are increasingly recognized and relied upon in healthcare.
- We assessed patient and consumer perspectives on and satisfaction with medical care provided by PAs

Methods
- After IRB approval, we conducted an online survey in November-December 2018 using quota sampling to approximate the proportions in gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, geographical region, and setting (N=1,388) of the US population
- The questionnaire assessed whether participants were ever treated by a PA; those who indicated yes were asked about their satisfaction with the medical care received, the likelihood of seeing a PA again, and if they would recommend a family member or friend see a PA
- Participants who reported never being treated by a PA were assessed on their willingness to seek treatment from PAs
- The survey also assessed demographic characteristics (age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, urban-suburban-rural home setting), number of visits to provider in the last 12 months, health status (excellent, good, fair, poor) and health insurance type
- Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests and multivariate logistic regression were conducted using R

Results
- The majority (66.7%) reported being treated by PAs with the strongest predictors being older age and more provider visits in the past year
- Of those who were treated:
  - 91.0% were very satisfied/satisfied with care received and satisfaction was broadly similar across demographic groups
  - 85.1% would be very/moderately likely to see a PA again; however, older participants (p=0.011) and those with less education (p=0.003) were less likely
  - 71.9% also indicated ‘very likely/likely’ to recommend friends/family see a PA
  - Participants age 35-64 (p=0.014) with some college/associates degree (p=0.002), excellent self-reported health (p<0.001), and private insurance (p=0.030) were more likely to recommend
- Of those not previously treated by PAs:
  - 30.6% were willing, 43.8% were willing only for minor medical needs, and 25.6% were unwilling/needed to learn more about PAs
  - Participants with more provider visits (p=0.015), poor health (p=0.005), and Medicaid (p=0.030) were more likely to be unwilling/needing to learn more about PAs
- Consumer and patient perspectives regarding PAs are very favorable
- However, opportunities still exist to reach more patients as a third reported never being treated by PAs or were unsure, and of these about a quarter were unwilling or needed to learn more about what PAs do

Discussion
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- However, opportunities still exist to reach more patients as a third reported never being treated by PAs or were unsure, and of these about a quarter were unwilling or needed to learn more about what PAs do