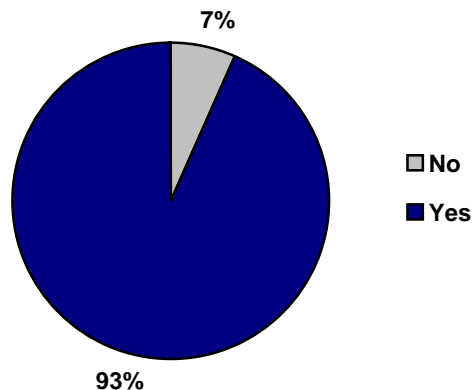


AmeriMed ConsultingSM Trend Tracker

The Trend Tracker series assesses the current state of America's healthcare industry through the presentation of original data and analysis. This analysis investigates the likelihood of physicians accepting new Medicare and Medicaid patients based on characteristics of the physicians themselves.

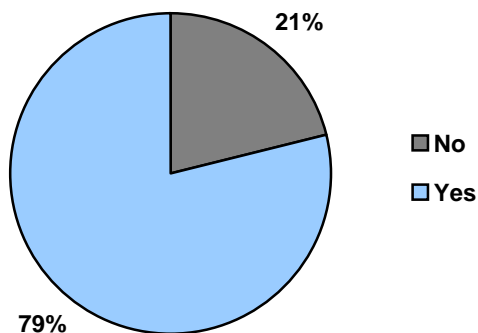
AmeriMed Consulting surveys communities, providers and healthcare executives on a regular basis. AmeriMed Consulting mailed surveys to 2244 randomly selected physicians throughout the United States in the fourth quarter of 2005 and the first quarter of 2006. Only private practice physicians in non-hospital based specialties were included in the survey pool. We received 485 completed surveys, for a response rate of 21.6%.

Are you accepting new Medicare* patients?



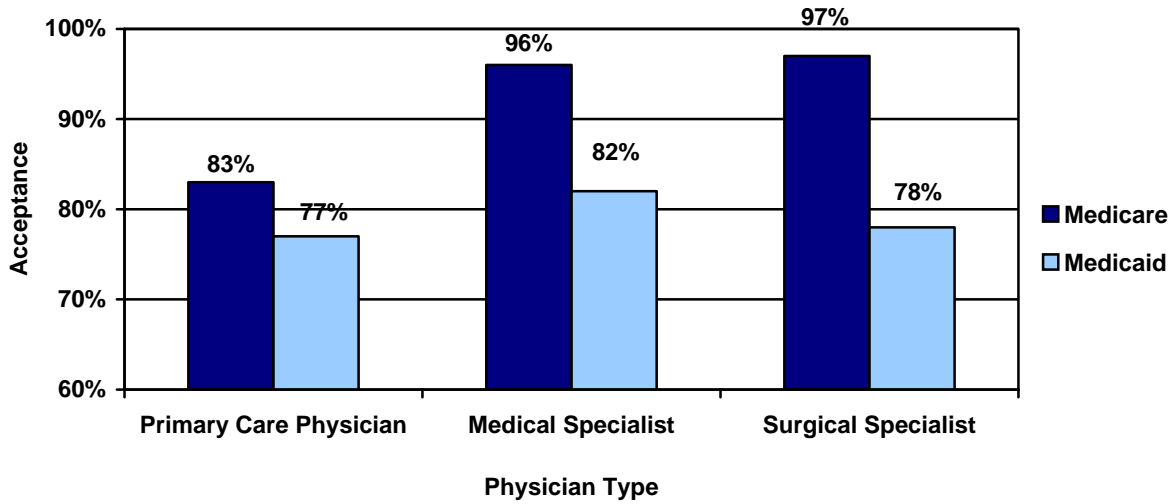
** Pediatricians and Pediatric Specialists were excluded from Medicare analyses*

Are you accepting new Medicaid patients?



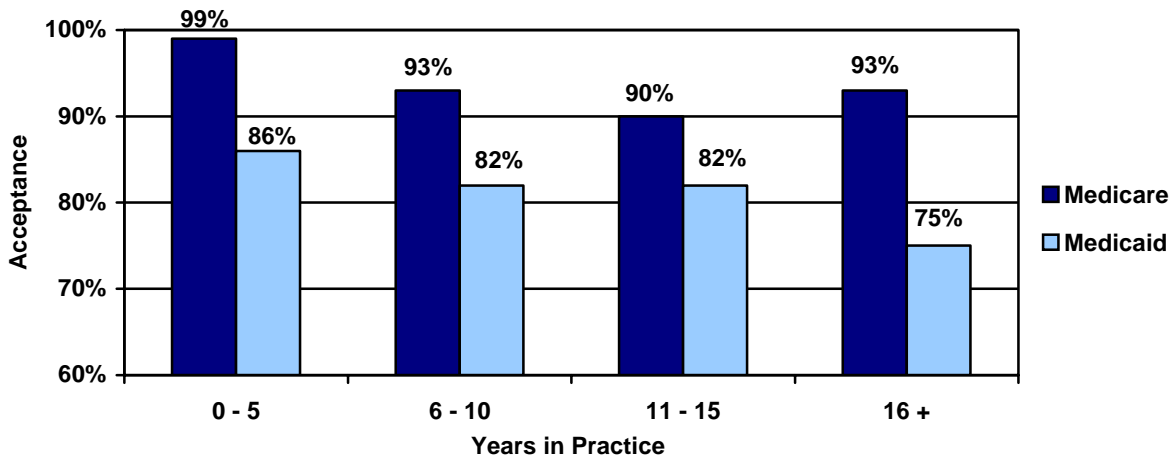
Access to Physician Services

Acceptance of Insurance by Type of Physician

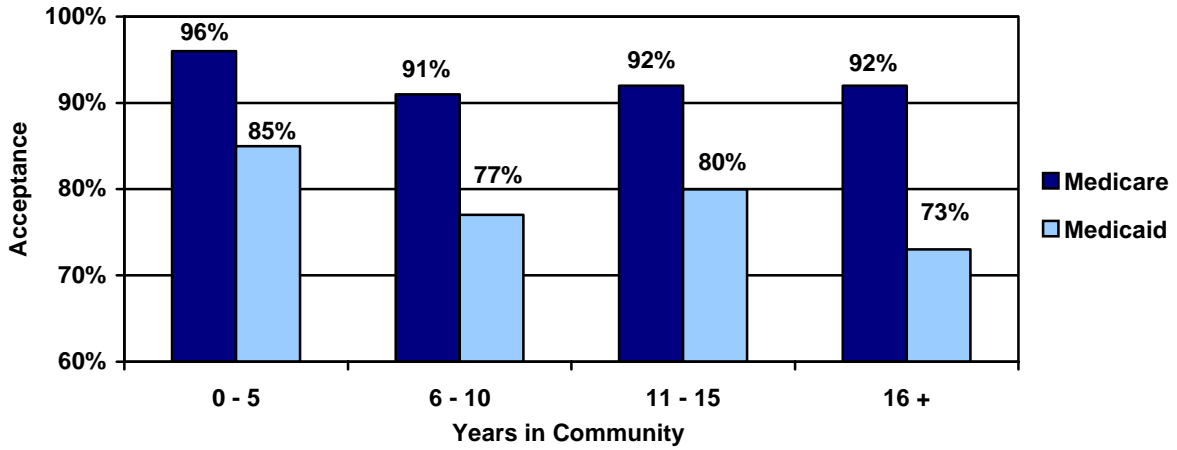


* For the purpose of this research, primary care is described as family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics seeing patients at least part time in an outpatient setting.

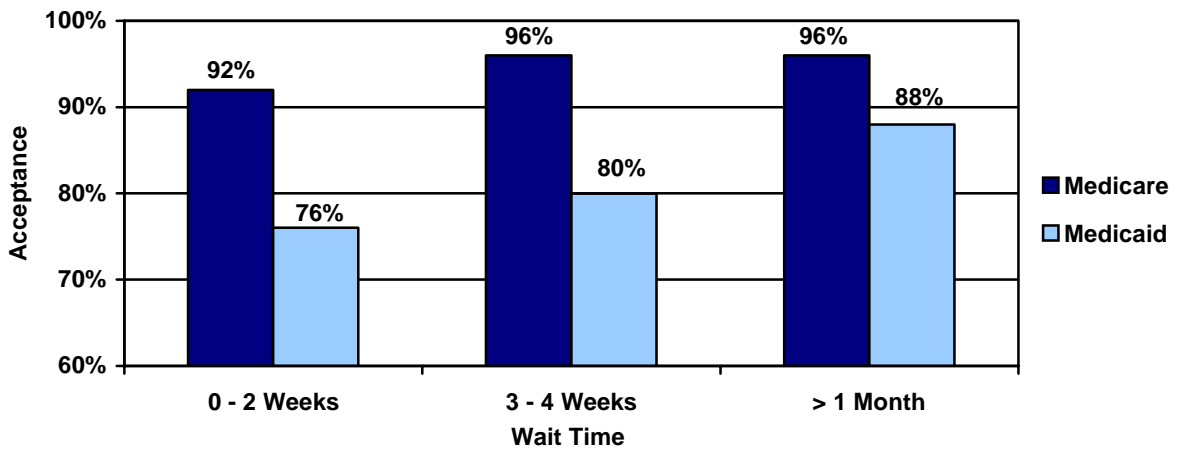
Acceptance of Insurance by Years in Practice



Acceptance of Insurance by Years in Community



Acceptance of Insurance by Wait Time for Appointment



Who Will See New Medicare/Medicaid Patients?

As Baby Boomers hit the magic age of 65, enrollment in Medicare is expected to hit record highs. Likewise, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Medicaid enrollment has been increasing over the past five years. Who will these patients turn to for care?

Luckily for these patients, most physicians are accepting both new Medicare and Medicaid patients. The overwhelming majority, 93% of physicians surveyed reported that they are seeing new Medicare patients. The pool of physicians shrinks, however, for those accepting new Medicaid. Seventy nine percent of physicians overall have practices open for these patients. While the survey asked if practices were open to new patients with different health insurance policies, it did not ask how many new patients would be seen. Limitations of this nature could cause some people to have difficulty with access to care as anecdotal evidence in many communities suggests that physicians may limit the number of new patients on these payors accepted each month or quarter.

Primary care physicians were less likely than surgical or medical specialists to accept new Medicare patients. They were also the least likely to accept new Medicaid patients. Limited access to these physicians can lead to difficulty being diagnosed and referred to the appropriate specialist. Patients without primary care physicians are also more likely to seek care in already overcrowded hospital emergency departments, further taxing healthcare delivery. Interestingly, while almost all surgical specialists (97%) will see new Medicare patients, only 78% will see new Medicaid patients.

New physicians, those practicing five years or less, are the most likely to accept new patients with either insurance type. The same can be said for those who are new to a community. The acceptance rate falls as physicians gain more experience and establish their practice.

Unfortunately, physicians accepting new patients from federally funded programs also have the longest wait for appointments. Only 76% of physicians who can see new patients within 2 weeks are accepting new Medicaid patients. In this survey there was a statistically significant ($p=0.02$; $\alpha=0.05$) difference in the wait times for physician offices accepting Medicaid versus those who do not. Offices accepting Medicaid had an average wait of 14.4 days while the wait was reported as 8.9 days for offices that do not. The wait was slightly shorter, 13.3 days, for offices accepting new Medicare patients.

The news is both good and bad for new patients with Medicare or Medicaid. While there are physicians available to see these patients, primary care physicians are the least likely to accept them. They may also be waiting longer for care.

For additional copies of this study or others like it, please visit our website: www.amerimedconsulting.com

Media and consulting inquires can be answered via telephone at 888.456.1789 or by fax at 972.745.4500. Email inquiries about the study should be directed to Joelyn Howard, Strategic Consultant at jhoward@amerimedconsulting.com