



DataBrief: Findings from a National Survey of Physicians

Evidence has long shown that much of the health care delivered in the United States may provide little benefit to patients. Experts have reported that up to 30 percent of U.S. health care spending is duplicative or unnecessary and research shows that certain tests, procedures, doctor visits, hospital stays and other services may not be necessary and could cause harm.

Since its launch in 2012, the *Choosing Wisely* campaign has led efforts to improve communication between patients and clinicians to reduce unnecessary tests and treatments in health care. To date, 76 medical specialty groups have identified 495 tests, treatments or procedures that are common to their specialty, but may offer negligible benefit.

Choosing Wisely encourages and enhances clinician and patient conversations about what care is really needed for a given condition. Physicians, in particular, play critical leadership roles in promoting and managing the delivery and use of health care resources. Some physicians say they struggle to have conversations about appropriate tests and treatments with their patients. Many say they prescribe tests and treatments that may not be necessary, but do it to “cover their bases.” In addition, patients often request unnecessary care. Some physicians say they don’t always have enough time with patients for these important conversations.

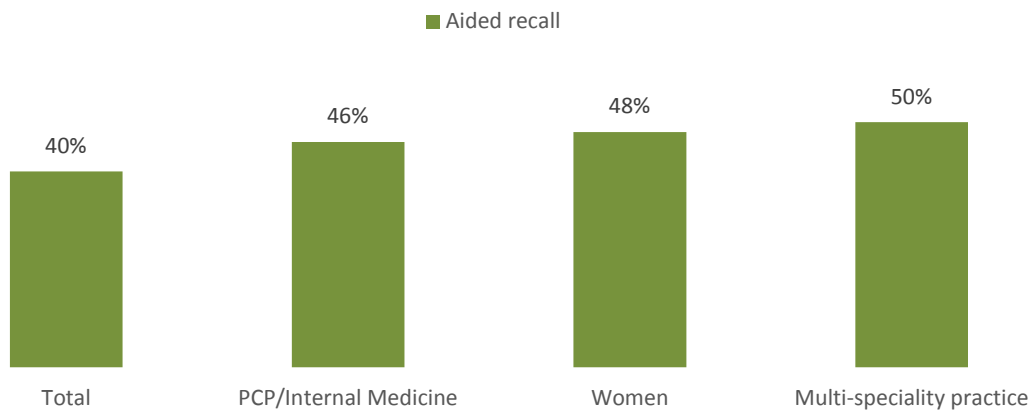
Since *Choosing Wisely’s* launch in 2012, resources have primarily been used to support local grantees working to reduce overuse based on specific *Choosing Wisely* recommendations. Relatively few resources have been spent on increasing national awareness of *Choosing Wisely*. Implementation efforts have occurred in a variety of clinical settings, mostly in health systems where frontline clinicians—with leadership support—have driven local efforts.

The survey results highlight and reinforce the challenges of reaching into typical clinical practices that are overwhelmed with demands. Nevertheless—and despite massive changes in the U.S. health care system that attracted global attention—physician awareness of *Choosing Wisely* and the topic of overuse of medical tests and procedures has held steady.

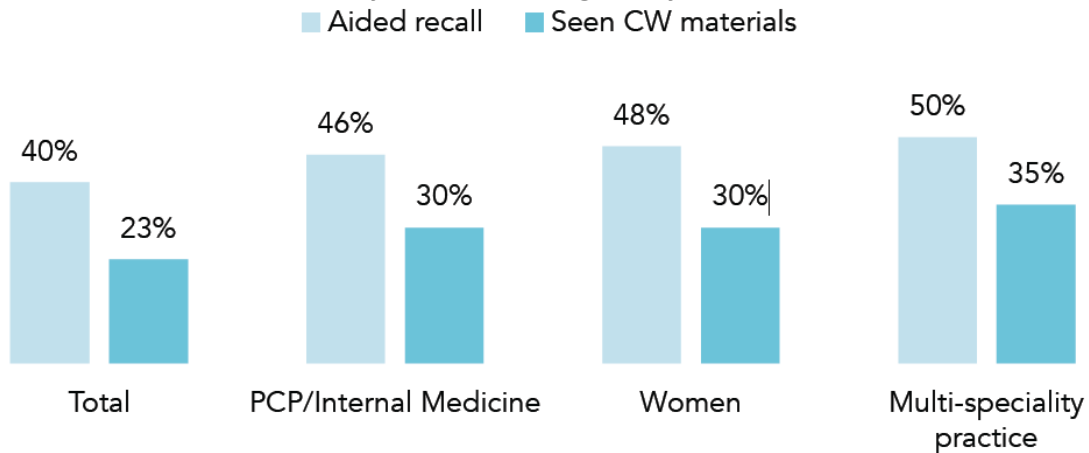
Key Findings from 2017 Survey of Physicians

40% of physicians—46% of primary care doctors—are aware of the *Choosing Wisely* campaign.

Is the *Choosing Wisely* campaign something you have seen or heard about?
Have you seen *Choosing Wisely* materials? (% yes)

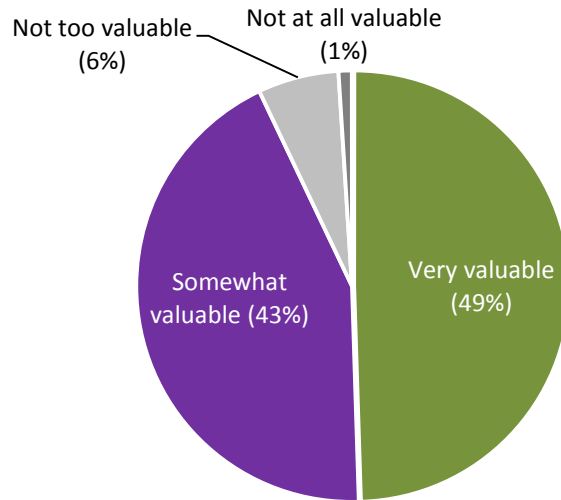


Have you seen *Choosing Wisely* Materials?



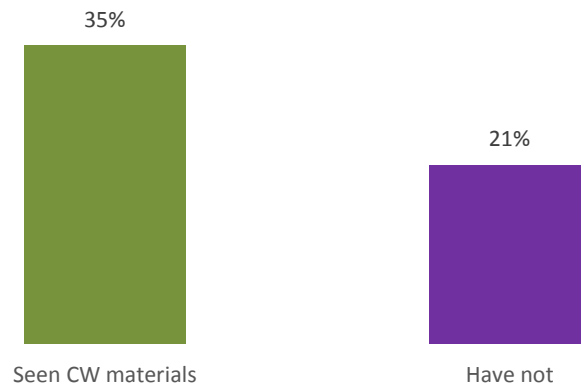
93% of primary care physicians and 85% of all physicians who have seen *Choosing Wisely* materials say they help physicians talk to patients about unnecessary tests and procedures.

Do you feel *Choosing Wisely* is valuable or not valuable in helping physicians talk to patients about unnecessary tests and procedures?



Physicians who have seen *Choosing Wisely* materials are 14 points more likely to say it has gotten easier over the past few years to talk to patients about avoiding unnecessary care.

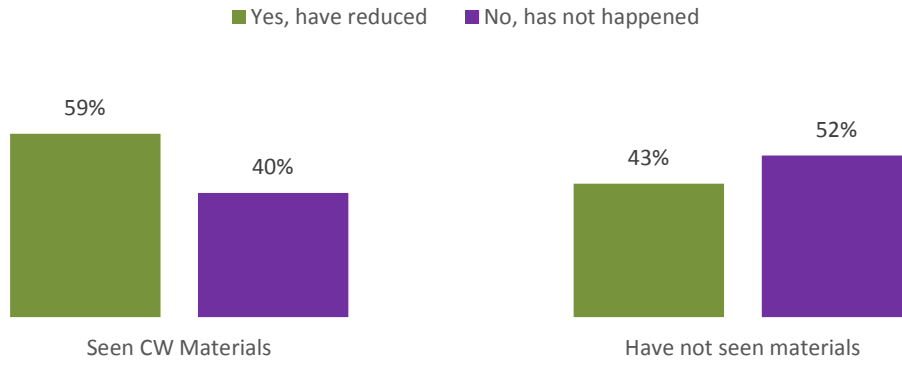
Over the last few years, has it gotten easier or harder to talk to patients about why they should avoid a test or procedure? (% Easier)



59% of physicians who have seen *Choosing Wisely* materials say they have reduced the number of times they recommended a test or procedure in the last 12 months because they learned it was unnecessary.

Respondents who have not seen the campaign's materials are 16 points less likely to say they have reduced unnecessary care.

In the past 12 months, have you reduced the number of times you recommended a test or procedure because you learned it was unnecessary?



Other Findings of Note from 2017 Survey

- 87% of physicians who have seen *Choosing Wisely* materials say they've heard of evidence about when to order tests (or not) in the last 12 months—compared to 59% of those who have not seen materials.
- 69% of physicians say the average physician prescribes an unnecessary test or procedure at least once a week.
- 77% of physicians say the frequency of unnecessary tests and procedures is a serious problem.
- 63% of physicians think physicians are in the best position to help address the problem of unnecessary tests and procedures.
- 92% of physicians think they have at least some responsibility for making sure patients avoid unnecessary tests and procedures.
- Nearly half of physicians (45%) would refuse to order a test for a patient who was insistent about needing a specific test the doctor knew was unnecessary.
- Reasons physicians sometimes order an unnecessary test or procedure include:

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Percentage of physicians saying major or minor reason for ordering unnecessary test or procedure</i>
Concern about malpractice issues	86%
Wanting more information to reassure yourself	83%
Just to be safe	76%
Patients insisting on the test or procedure	73%
Wanting to keep patients happy	71%
Feeling patients should be able to make the final decision	55%
Not enough time with the patient for meaningful discussion	48%
Having new technology in your practice	32%
Fee-for-service system of payment	31%

- 83% of physicians always or almost always talk to patients about why they should not have a test or procedure, when they ask for something the physician feels is unnecessary.
- 90% of physicians say that when they talk to patients about unnecessary tests or procedures, patients follow their advice and avoid the test/procedure at least half the time.
 - 27% of physicians who have seen *Choosing Wisely* materials say they will talk to patients more often in the next 12 months about unnecessary care—compared to 19% of physicians who have not seen materials.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by telephone in March and April 2017 by PerryUndem Research/Communication on behalf of the ABIM Foundation. A total of 601 physicians nationwide were

surveyed (360 primary care physicians and 241 specialists). The margin of sampling error overall for physicians is +/- 4.0 percentage points.

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