Physicians Consider Frequent Call Burdensome

BY ALICIA AULT

FROM A SURVEY BY THE AMERICAN MEDICAL GROUP ASSOCIATION

Physicians are more concerned about the burden of taking call than about how much they get paid for providing coverage at hospital emergency departments, according to a survey by the American Medical Group Association and a consulting firm.

About 50 medical groups participated, primarily from independently owned, large, multispecialty groups. Dr. Donald W. Fisher, president and CEO of the AMGA, said that most of the data on physicians' opinions on call coverage have been anecdotal. The AMGA survey, conducted with ECG Management Consultants, quantifies better what's actually happening, he said.

According to the survey, when physicians were asked to choose between reduced call burden or payment, 58% of those surveyed said it was more important to reduce call burden. More than half the respondents said their call burden was high.

The survey also asked physicians for some potential solutions to reducing call burden. Respondents said that the advent of hospitalists – which they regarded as favorable – was a potentially important way to reduce call burden. The majority of respondents said that use of nocturnists would be helpful. And 70% said that offering preferred scheduling on the day after call would be a good way to address call burden. ■

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