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PERIODIC SURVEY OF FELLOWS #82 – USE OF PEDIATRIC HOSPITALISTS

The topic of use of pediatric hospitalists for Periodic Survey of Fellows #82 was one of three included on the 2012 annual Omnibus Periodic Survey of Fellows. The Omnibus survey was initiated to address emergent issues as identified by the AAP Board of Directors to support the AAP Strategic Plan. The hospitalist questions addressed frequency of and reasons for using pediatric hospitalists, assessment of satisfaction with care, and effects of hospitalist use on office-based practices. Selected questions were replicated or adapted from PS#62 (2005) and PS#52 (2002); comparisons between survey years were made where appropriate.

PS82 was an eight-page self-administered questionnaire sent to 1,638 nonretired U.S. members of the AAP, July - December 2012; response to the survey was 50% (790 respondents, including pediatric residents). Analyses were limited to post-resident pediatricians (N=646 in 2012; N=1041 in 2005; N=796 in 2002).

Transfer of care to pediatric hospitalists:

Most pediatricians have transferred care of at least some hospitalized patients to a pediatric hospitalist.

- Pediatricians report a similar number of patients hospitalized in both survey years: an average of 41 in 2005 and 44 in 2012 (the difference between years is not statistically significant).
- In 2012, pediatricians report they, as the primary care physician, were the attending physician of record for 32% of their hospitalized patients (excluding newborns) during the past year; 47% of their hospitalized patients were attended by pediatric hospitalists, 11% by a medical subspecialist and 9% had a surgeon/surgical subspecialist as the attending physician of record.
- In 2012, 75% of post-residency pediatricians who practice in an office-based or clinic-based ambulatory care setting report ever having referred a patient to a pediatric hospitalist for care.
- In 2012, 53% of pediatricians who have been in practice 5 or more years say the percent of hospitalized patients they have referred to pediatric hospitalists for care has increased compared to 5 years ago; 41% say it has stayed about the same, and 6% say it has decreased.
  - More pediatricians in urban (not inner city) and suburban areas compared to other practice areas say the they have increased the proportion of patients referred to pediatric hospitalists over the past 5 years (42% inner city vs. 57% other urban vs. 58% suburban vs. 41% rural, p<.05).

Reasons for transferring care of hospitalized patients to a pediatric hospitalist have remained similar across survey years.

- The primary reason for transferring care to a pediatric hospitalist in both survey years was that pediatric hospitalists provide the best care because they are available full-time in the hospital (62% in 2012; 61% in 2002).
- About half in both years say they transfer care because hospitalists work full-time with hospitalized children and therefore can provide the best care (50%, 54%), and that attending inpatients takes too much time away from an office practice (49%, 57%).
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- More than one-third (36%, 41%) say it is because they prefer to concentrate on ambulatory pediatrics, and about one-fourth each say they are uncomfortable managing hospitalized patients (28%, 20%), it is a requirement of the hospital (26%, 23%), and the hospital is inconveniently located from their practice/home (24%, 31%).

Satisfaction with hospitalists’ care:

Pediatricians are generally satisfied with the care provided by pediatric hospitalists.

- In 2012 as in 2002, most pediatricians are very satisfied/satisfied with the care provided by pediatric hospitalists (89%, 88%) and most believe their patients and families are satisfied with hospitalists’ care (85%, 83%). Pediatricians in both years highly rated their experiences with their local pediatric hospital medicine program – 83% in 2012 and 86% in 2002 reported they are very satisfied/satisfied with their local programs.
- Fewer pediatricians in 2012 than in 2002 report moderate/extensive communication between hospitalists and primary care physicians (62% vs. 79%, p<.001).
- Asked in 2012 only, most pediatricians are very (17%) or moderately (35%) satisfied with the extent of communication between pediatric hospitalists and referring pediatricians, 31% are somewhat satisfied and 17% say they are not at all satisfied.

Effect of hospitalist use on pediatric practice:

The effect on pediatric practices of using pediatric hospitalists was similar across survey years:

- In both survey years, a large majority of pediatricians say use of hospitalists has had no effect on their income (81% in 2012 and 78% in 2002) or the quality of their relationships with patients (84%, 77%).
- In 2012 and 2002, a high proportion of pediatricians say use of pediatric hospitalists has had no effect on their workload (54%, 44%), while 41% and 47%, respectively, say it has decreased their workload.
- In 2012, 39% of pediatricians say use of hospitalists has had no effect on continuity of care and in 2002, 31% so reported; 39% and 45%, respectively say it has decreased continuity of care.
- In both 2012 and 2002, most pediatricians say use of hospitalists has increased the overall quality of patient care (66%, 70%) and their office productivity (59%, 62%).