IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON OREGON PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS: SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

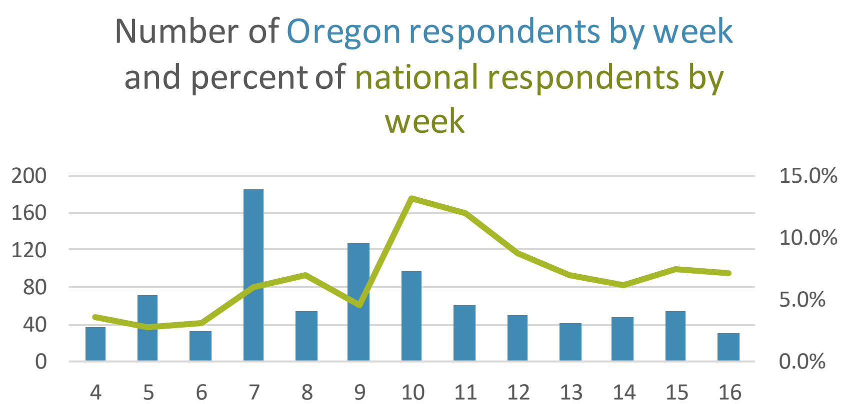
The Larry A. Green Center, in partnership with the Primary Care Collaborative, began conducting a weekly nationwide survey about the impacts of COVID-19 on primary care on March 13. National data are available through the Larry A. Green Center[1] and Oregon-specific responses are available through ORPRN.[2]

The "Quick COVID-19 Primary Care Survey" includes four core questions and a "flash" question. Not all questions are asked every week, so some information is only available for a point in time. We reviewed the Oregon responses to series 4 (April 3-6) to series 16 (July 10-13) and summarized the findings related to provider financial need and financial supports received.

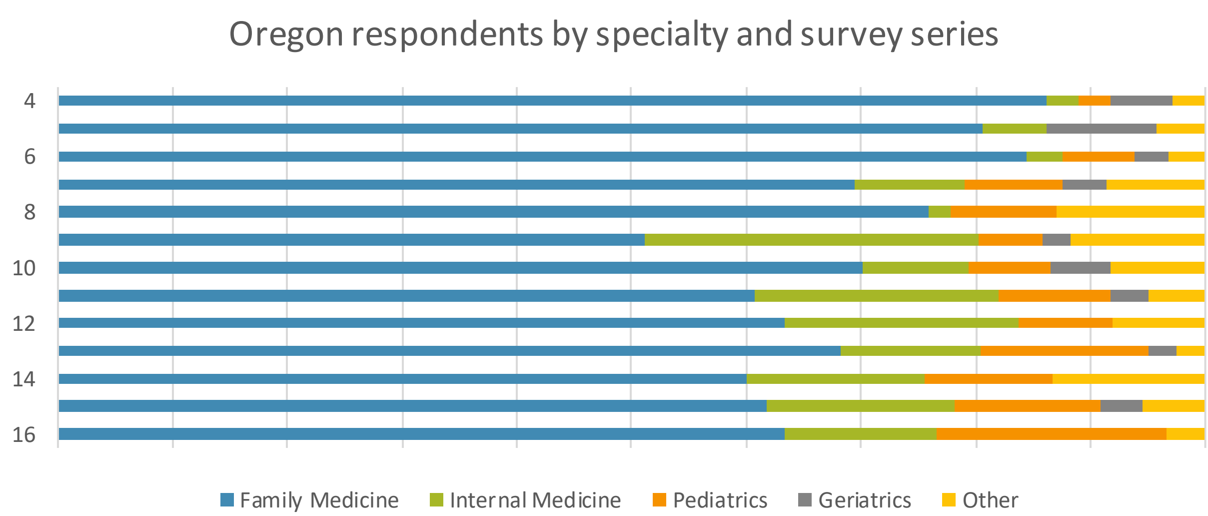
OREGON RESPONDENTS

Across the 13 waves of surveys we reviewed, the number of Oregon respondents averaged 68, with the most respondents in Series 7 (April 24-25).

Oregon respondents represented 5.7% of the total national sample on average, peaking in Series 10 (May 12-15), when 13.2% of the national sample were Oregon respondents.



On average, two-thirds of Oregon respondents identified their specialty as family medicine, followed by 13% internal medicine, 8% other primary care, 8% pediatrics, and 3% geriatrics.



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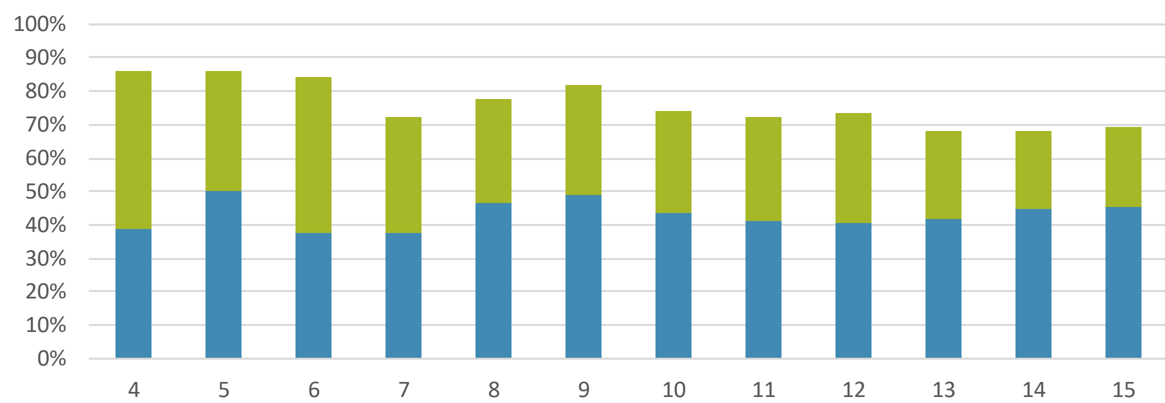
[1] https://www.green-center.org/covid-survey

[2] https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-rural-practice-based-research-network/hot-topics

STRAIN ON OREGON PRACTICES

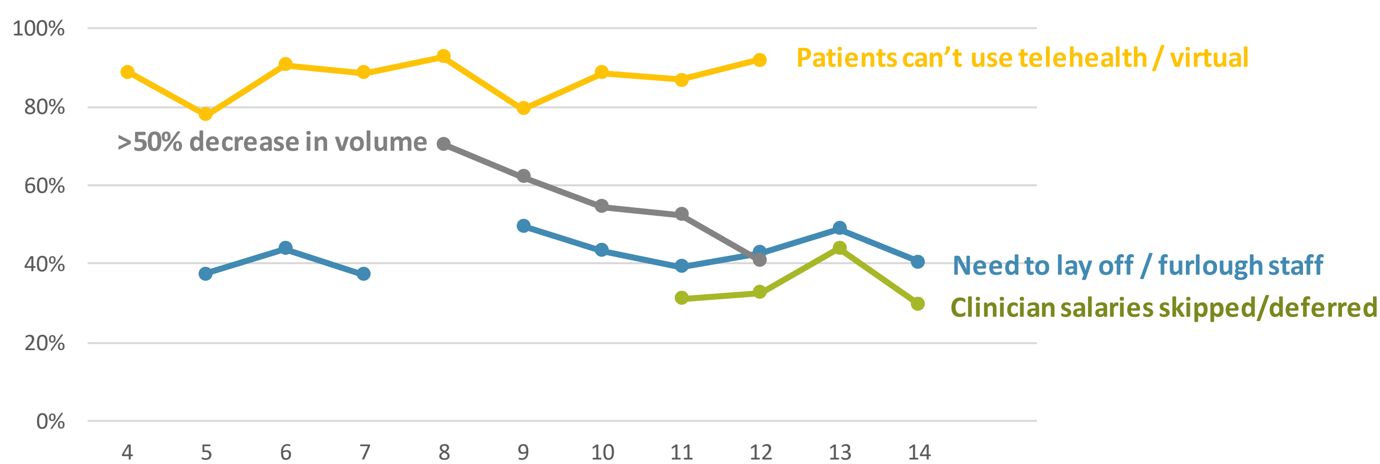
In each survey, respondents were asked to rate the level of strain related to COVID-19 on their practice from a scale of 1 (no impact) to 5 (severe impact). Initially (Series 4 through 6, April 3-20), almost 90% of Oregon respondents were reporting high or severe impacts to their practice. By Series 15 (June 26-29), this dropped to 69% of Oregon respondents.

Percent of Oregon respondents reporting their level of strain related to COVID-19 as **4 (high impact)** or **5 (severe impact),** by survey series



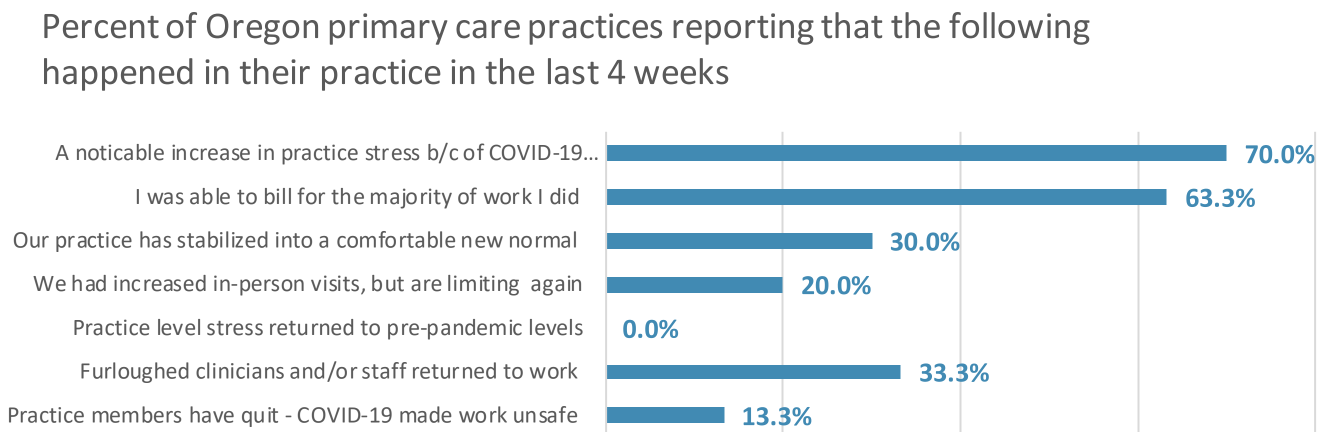
Note "strain" was not defined, but the following survey question asked about which potential stressors the practice experienced, including things like clinicians or front desk staff out, lack of PPE, patient mental health, and challenges with telehealth. We pulled out select response options related to financial strain and note that one of the most consistently high sources of stress was patients not being able to use telehealth or virtual services.

Percent of Oregon respondents who indicated they had these possible COVID-19 stresses in the last 4 weeks



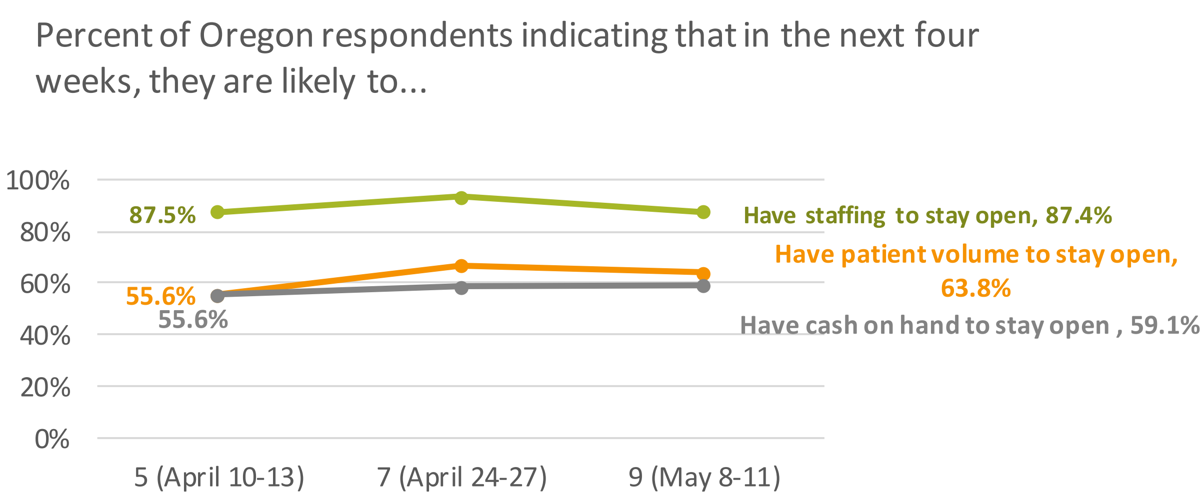
Response options to this question that were only offered in certain survey series include Series 9 (May 8-11) when 57.5% of Oregon respondents reported that their financial stress was at an all-time high, and Series 9 and 10, where about 5% of Oregon respondents indicated their SBA, PPP, or other loan application had been denied.

In Series 16 (July 10-13), practices were asked again about their last four weeks, with new response options. Notably, no Oregon practices reported that their stress had returned to pre-pandemic levels, and 70% reported an increase in practice stress because of COVID-19.

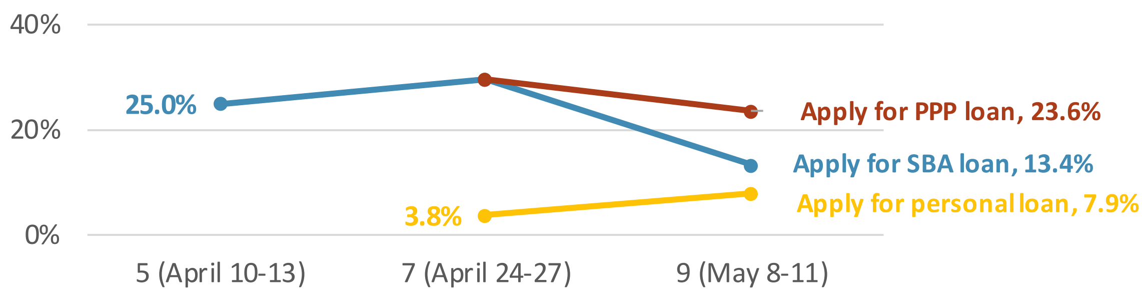


ABILITY TO STAY OPEN

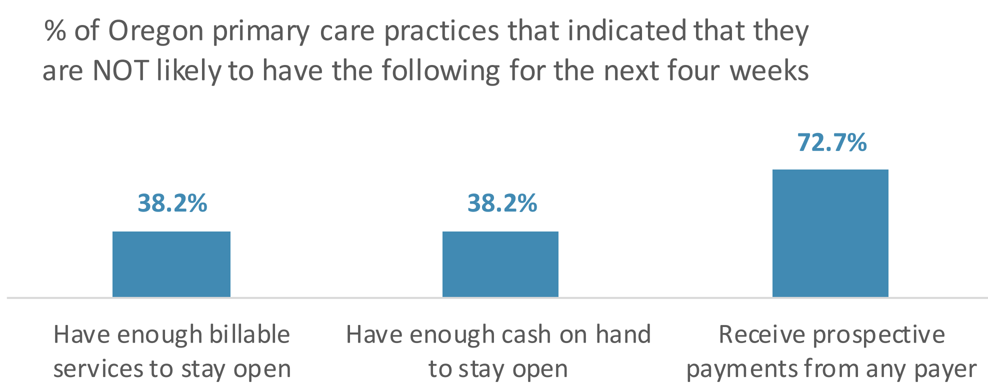
In three surveys, primary care providers were asked a series of questions about their ability to stay open and apply for financial supports in the next four weeks. Most Oregon respondents report they have staffing to stay open, although patient volume and cash on hand to support remaining open are more challenging.



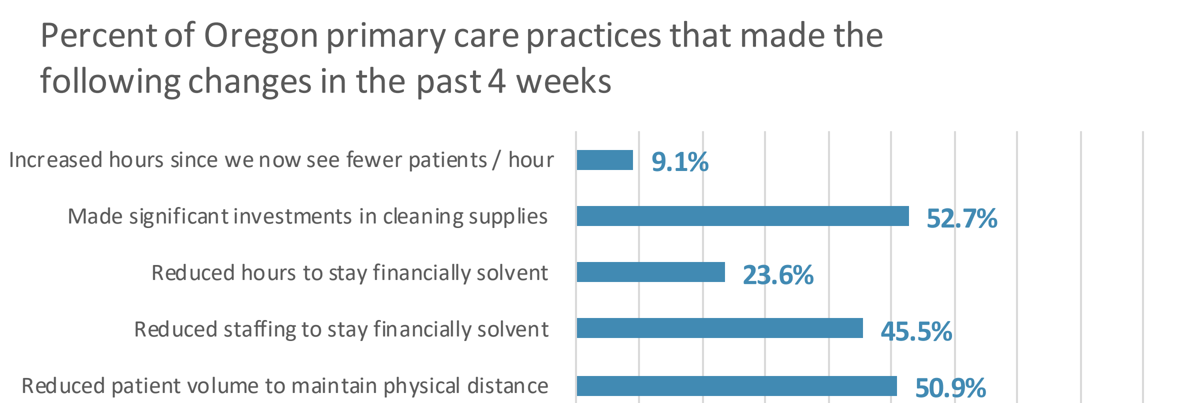
However, fewer Oregon providers reported that they were likely to apply for federal assistance or seek personal loans in the next four weeks.



Similar questions were asked again in Series 15 (When asked about the upcoming four weeks, more than a third of Oregon's primary care practices reported that they were not likely to have enough cash on hand or enough billable services to stay open. More than two-thirds of Oregon's primary care practices report they are not receiving prospective payments from any payer.



Series 15 also asked practices about changes they have made recently to remain open. Almost half of practices reported that they have reduced staffing to stay financially solvent, and just under a quarter of practices reported they have reduced hours to stay financially solvent.



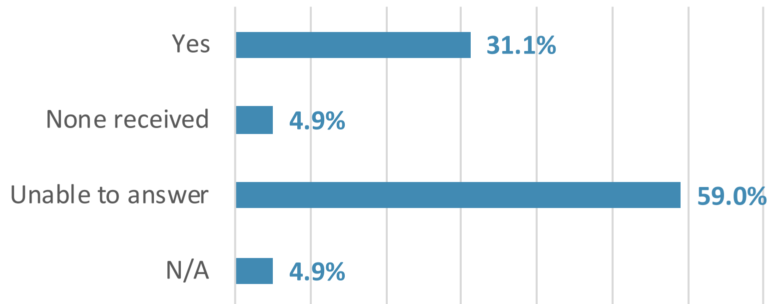
FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

The Series 11 survey, fielded from May 22-25, included questions about financial supports.

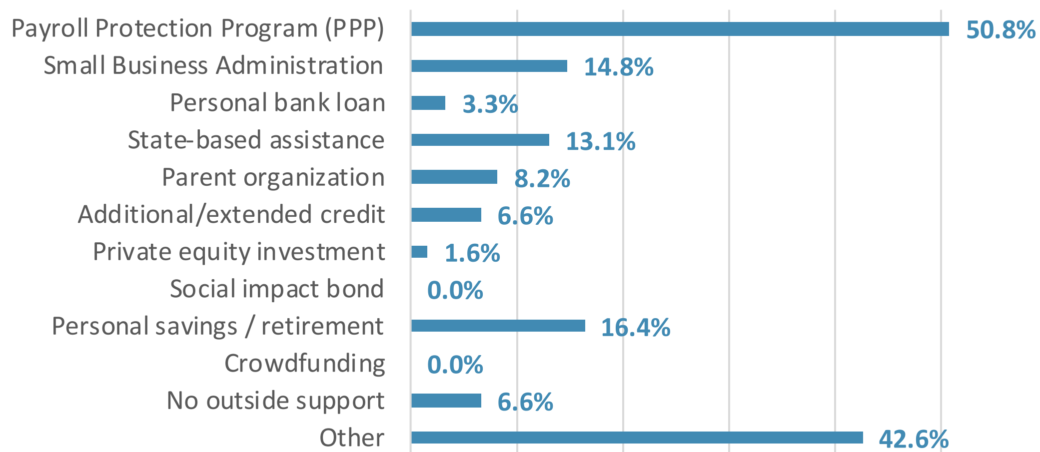
Just under a third of Oregon respondents indicated they have received some support from state and/or federal sources, however, this may be an undercount, as many respondents were unable to answer this question.

A more detailed question indicates that half of Oregon respondents have received support from the Payroll Protection Program, and more than 40% reported "other" financial support, **which may reflect Provider Relief Funds from the CARES Act.**

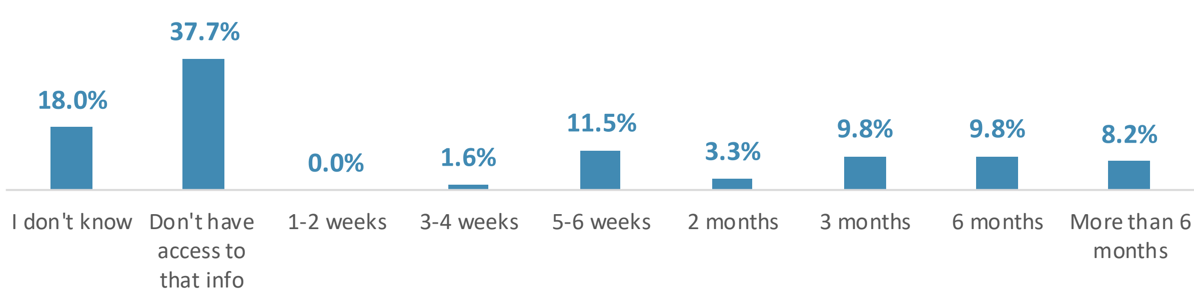
Percent of Oregon respondents who reported their practice has received state or federal financial supports



Percent of Oregon respondents who indicated their practice has received financial support from...

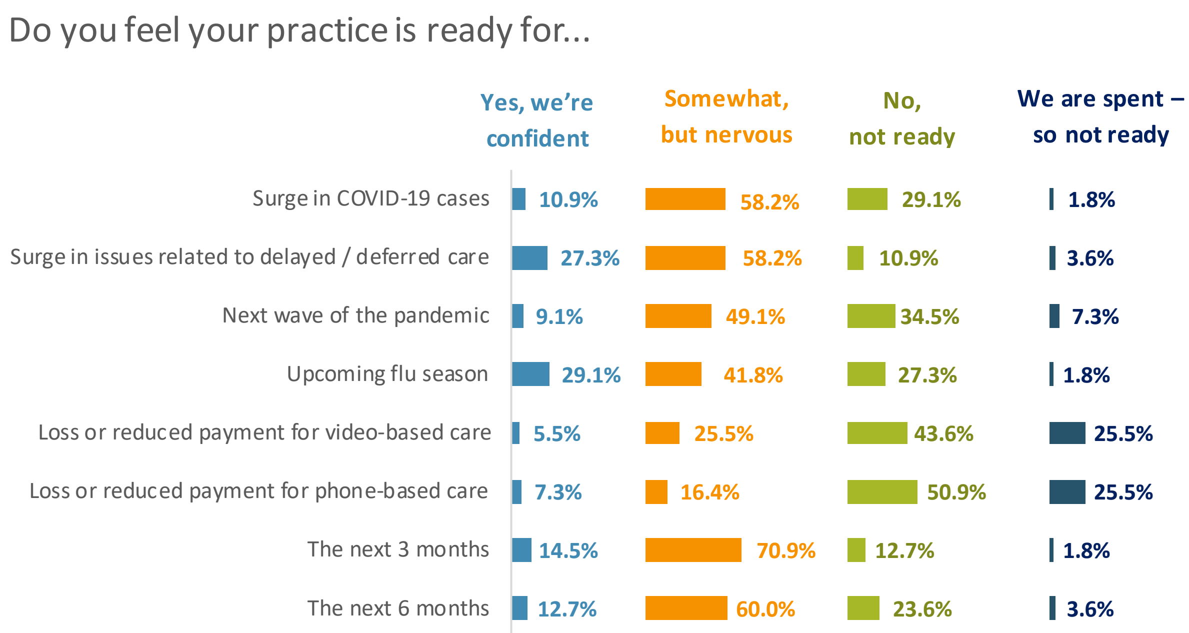


Finally, providers were asked how many weeks or months of financial reserves they had remaining. While more than a third of respondents did not have access to that information, Oregon respondents were mostly evenly distributed across 5-6 weeks to 6 months of reserves, indicating that some providers continue to be at risk.



LOOKING AHEAD

In the Series 15 survey (June 26-29), primary care practices were asked about their readiness for various scenarios. While primary care practices report some level of readiness and nervousness, more than 90% of practices expressed some concern about loss or reduced payment for video-based and phone-based care.



In Series 16 (July 10-13), primary care practices were also asked what we need to understand about their stress levels. Half report constant and severe stress, and 60 percent report symptoms of burnout.