

NCPeds and NCAFP COVID-19 Impact Survey

May 2020

The NC Pediatric Society and the NC Academy of Family Physicians teamed up to conduct a survey of family physicians and pediatricians. The survey included responses from approximately 500 physicians and was conducted April 30th - May 4th.

KEY FINDINGS

1 FINANCIAL PRESSURES

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, 87% of respondents said they were under "significant" or "extreme" financial pressure. One in ten physicians say they are considering closing their doors or selling their practices, with that increasing for rural practices (13%) and physician-owned practices (~15%). Not surprisingly, physician-owned practices are seeing the greatest financial impact. Even with telehealth medicine options now available, all primary care practices have experienced a "devastating loss" in patient volume. Two-thirds of respondents said their patient volume has dropped 40% or more since the pandemic began.

Primary care practices need immediate financial support to weather COVID-19. **Without interventions, there is a serious chance that North Carolina will lose primary care capacity, especially in rural areas.** Without a strong, reliable primary care infrastructure, patients will be forced to seek care in higher-cost settings and are more likely to experience diminished health quality.

2 TELEHEALTH NEEDS

The vast majority (93%) of practices are using telehealth options to assist in care during this crisis. Respondents noted significant concerns regarding insurers promoting 3rd party telehealth services versus telehealth provided directly from the medical home.

Respondents reported a continued need to provide support to patients to access and use telehealth.

3 PROBLEMS WITH PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Access to personal protective equipment (PPE) remains an ongoing concern for primary care doctors. Practices need adequate PPE to ensure that they can keep patients safe during in-office visits. While PPE needs have eased since the beginning of the COVID crisis, pediatric practices, rural practices, and physician-owned practices reported the greatest ongoing need for adequate PPE.

CONCLUSION

Physician-owned and rural practices continue to face the greatest financial distress during the COVID crisis. NCPeds and NCAFP both encourage the state and other payers to provide financial support to primary care practices and continued stability in telehealth policies. NCPeds and NCAFP urge legislators to provide \$30 million to NCDHHS to allocate to independent practices that are Medicaid providers in specialties of need.

