

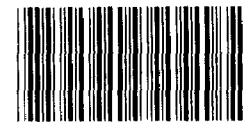
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SUPPLEMENT TO A REPORT BY THE U.S.

General Accounting Office

Changes Needed In Medicare Payments To Physicians Under The End Stage Renal Disease Program

This supplement contains the results of GAO's questionnaire used to obtain the views on the End Stage Renal Disease program of its beneficiaries and renal physicians who provide services under it.



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GAO/HRD-85-14A
FEBRUARY 1, 1985

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

HUMAN RESOURCES
DIVISION

B-210417

The Honorable Margaret M. Heckler
The Secretary of Health and
Human Services

Dear Madam Secretary:

This supplement to our report Changes Needed in Medicare Payments to Physicians Under the End Stage Renal Disease Program (GAO/HRD-85-14) contains the results of the questionnaire sent to program beneficiaries and renal physicians. The report includes analyses of selected responses to the questionnaire, and this supplement presents the full results of it.

The questionnaire developed substantial information on patients' and physicians' practices which does not specifically relate to matters discussed in the report. This information should, however, be useful to those involved with the End Stage Renal Disease program.

Copies of the supplement are being distributed to the same individuals and organizations that received our report.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard L. Fogel".

Richard L. Fogel
Director



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ABBREVIATIONS

ARM	alternative reimbursement method
CAPD	continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis
CCPD	continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis
ESRD	End Stage Renal Disease
GAO	General Accounting Office
HCFA	Health Care Financing Administration
IPD	intermittent peritoneal dialysis



RESULTS OF RENALPHYSICIAN QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

In December 1982, we mailed questionnaires to 554 physicians treating end stage renal disease (ESRD) patients nationwide. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain information on the

- average number of ESRD patients per physician,
- average amount of time physicians spend providing various types of renal services,
- number of monthly contacts physicians have with renal patients and the length of time spent with each patient,
- physicians' views regarding selected aspects of the Health Care Financing Administration's (HCFA's) proposed regulations, and
- physicians' opinions on implementation of a monthly retainer reimbursement amount for all dialysis care (total capitation payment system).

PRETEST

The questionnaire was pretested with five physicians in the Boston, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C., areas. While being timed by a trained GAO observer, physicians in the pretest completed the questionnaire as if they had received it in the mail. To ensure subjects were not asked leading questions, we used a standardized procedure with only indirect inquiries to elicit subjects' descriptions of the various difficulties and issues encountered as they completed each item.

Based on the results of the pretest, we revised the questionnaire to help ensure that all questions were fair, relevant, easy to understand and answer, and relatively free of design flaws that could introduce bias or error into the study results. The responses to the pretest questionnaires were not used in the final report.

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was sent to all ESRD physicians in the 10 states initially selected for review and to a sample of ESRD

physicians in the other 40 states. The questionnaire was administered to both groups by mail with one initial and two follow-up mailings, plus a mailgram. Finally, telephone calls were made to a random sample of the physicians who had not responded. Up to three follow-up telephone calls were made to the selected physicians to determine why they had not responded and if their characteristics differed from those of the respondents.

The universe and sample size for each physician group is discussed below.

Ten-state group

Based on information derived from the six Medicare carriers¹ administering the ESRD program in the 10 review states, we identified physicians we believed were treating ESRD patients. In some states, we had to call or visit some dialysis facilities to obtain the desired information. The following table shows the number of physicians in the original and adjusted universes for each of the 10 states:

<u>State</u>	<u>Number of physicians</u>	
	<u>Original universe</u>	<u>Adjusted universe</u>
Alaska	2	2
Arizona	29	26
Arkansas	18	16
Hawaii	10	9
Massachusetts	88	71
Nevada	9	9
Oregon	26	23
Rhode Island	16	10
Louisiana	50	38
Washington	40	39
Total	<u>288</u>	<u>243</u>

The universe was adjusted for 10 physicians who could not be located, 29 who responded that they did not treat ESRD patients, 4 who moved out of our sample area, and 2 who did not participate in the Medicare program. After all follow-up

¹Aetna Life and Casualty Company, Arkansas Blue Shield, Massachusetts Blue Shield, Pan American Life Insurance Company, Rhode Island Blue Shield, and Washington Physician Services.

efforts were exhausted, we had received 183 responses representing 75 percent of the adjusted universe for ESRD physicians in our 10-state group.

For the most part, the nonresponding physicians contacted gave lack of time as their reason. Few suggested that they had difficulty in understanding the questionnaire or perceived any design flaws or bias. We determined this after taking a telephone call survey from a random sample of 35 physicians out of 71 nonrespondents.²

Selected responses from the physicians in eight states--Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, and Rhode Island--were compared with those received from the beneficiaries in these states. The responses compared related to the number of contacts, the length of time seen by a physician, and the types of care provided.

Forty-state group

We developed the universe and sample size for this group in two stages. First, from HCFA's list of ESRD facilities, we grouped the facilities by size as follows, without distinction between hospital-based or free-standing facilities.

Facilities Groupings

<u>Criteria-- number of dialysis stations</u>	<u>Number of dialysis facilities</u>	
	<u>With home care patients</u>	<u>With no home care patients</u>
1 - 9	209	328
10 - 19	259	143
20 or more	<u>144</u>	<u>51</u>
Total	<u>612</u>	<u>522</u>

From this universe of 1,134 facilities, we statistically selected a sample of 78 facilities as follows:

²After conducting our telephone calls, we received 11 additional responses, reducing our final count of nonrespondents to 60.

Number of Facilities Selected for our Sample

<u>Criteria-- number of dialysis stations</u>	<u>Number of dialysis facilities</u>		
	<u>Home care patients</u>	<u>Nonhome care</u>	<u>Total</u>
1 - 9	13	13	26
10 - 19	13	11	24
20 or more	<u>15</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>28</u>
Total	<u>41</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>78</u>

We selected the sample size and the facilities in each group so the overall expected sampling error would be no more than + 0.8 percent at the 95-percent confidence level. We then sent letters to 68 facilities,³ requesting the names and addresses of physicians treating ESRD patients. Fifty-nine facilities responded, providing the requested information for a total of 266 physicians. We then mailed questionnaires to all of these physicians. Upon completion of all follow-up efforts, we had an adjusted universe of 254 due to 1 physician who could not be located, 9 who responded that they did not treat ESRD patients, and 2 who did not participate in the Medicare program. We received 162 usable responses, representing 64 percent of the adjusted universe for the 40-state group.

We randomly selected 35 of the 91 nonresponding physicians for a follow-up telephone survey to determine why they had not returned our questionnaires. Most physicians cited heavy workloads and a lack of time for not responding. Few gave disagreements with the questionnaire as reasons for not responding.

PHYSICIANS' RESPONSES

To obtain a nationwide perspective of physician responses, we combined all physician responses. This was accomplished through appropriate weighting and statistical testing and estimating techniques. The rest of this appendix presents the results of our questionnaire survey.

³Of the facilities selected, we omitted 10 facilities due to their location in our 10-state group.

Question 1: Size of ESRD practice

Including yourself, how many physicians treat ESRD patients in your practice?

<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Estimated average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
345	3.6	0.3	18	1

^aAll explanatory notes are in back of appendix I (see p. 27).

Question 2: Percentage of physicians' time spent treating ESRD patients

During the past 6 months, approximately what percentage of your individual medical practice time was spent treating ESRD patients?

<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Estimated average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
342	48.8%	14.0	100%	1%

Question 3: Treatment setting and reimbursement method

Please list the facilities and/or hospitals where your ESRD patients are currently dialyzed as outpatients. For each, indicate (1) whether it is a free-standing facility or a hospital-based center and (2) under which method the patient is being billed for physician services.

(1) Treatment setting

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percent estimates^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Free-standing facilities	108	32.9	0.39
Hospital based	117	38.1	.66
Both	119	32.5	.41

(2) Reimbursement method

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percent estimates^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Initial	39	10.7	0.14
ARM	271	82.8	.19
Both	29	8.3	.25

Question 4: Size of ESRD practice and frequency of patient contacts

Consider your medical practice with the various types of ESRD dialysis patients who received outpatient care in the past 6 months. Listed below are six questions concerning these patients and your contacts with them. Answer each question for each type of patient receiving dialysis at

- free-standing dialysis facility--all treatment types,
- hospital-based dialysis facility--all treatment types,
- home (hemodialysis),
- home (intermittent peritoneal dialysis (IPD)),
- home (continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD)),
- home (continuous cycling peritoneal dialysis (CCPD)).

<u>Free-standing facility</u>			
	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1) The number of ESRD dialysis patients your practice was treating as of September 30, 1982.	222	c	c
(2) The equivalent number of ESRD dialysis patients you personally covered for the practice as of September 30, 1982.	216	21.5 ^d	11.9
(3) During the last 6 months, the average number of dialysis treatments or exchanges each of the patients handled by your practice received each month.	212	12.3	0.0
(4) During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	213	10.3 ^e	1.0
(5) During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	211	2.0 ^e	0.1
(6) During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	207	1.9	0.1

<u>Hospital-based facility</u>		<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1)	The number of ESRD dialysis patients your practice was treating as of September 30, 1982.	220	c	c
(2)	The equivalent number of ESRD dialysis patients you personally covered for the practice as of September 30, 1982.	208	12.6 ^d	5.9
(3)	During the last 6 months, the average number of dialysis treatments or exchanges each of the patients handled by your practice received each month.	204	11.8	0.1
(4)	During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	206	10.8 ^f	0.2
(5)	During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	201	2.9 ^f	0.5
(6)	During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	196	2.5	0.1

<u>Home hemodialysis</u>		<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1)	The number of ESRD dialysis patients your practice was treating as of September 30, 1982.	318	5.6	2.5
(2)	The equivalent number of ESRD dialysis patients you personally covered for the practice as of September 30, 1982.	308	1.8 ^d	0.2
(3)	During the last 6 months, the average number of dialysis treatments or exchanges each of the patients handled by your practice received each month.	171	12.6	0.1
(4)	During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	158	1.09	0.1
(5)	During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	169	1.49	0.0
(6)	During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	167	1.8	0.1

<u>Home IPD</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1) The number of ESRD dialysis patients your practice was treating as of September 30, 1982.	332	0.6	0.1
(2) The equivalent number of ESRD dialysis patients you personally covered for the practice as of September 30, 1982.	330	0.3 ^d	0.0
(3) During the last 6 months, the average number of dialysis treatments or exchanges each of the patients handled by your practice received each month.	36	6.5	0.2
(4) During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	40	0.6 ^h	0.0
(5) During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	50	0.7 ^h	0.1
(6) During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	48	0.6	0.1

<u>Home CAPD</u>		<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1)	The number of ESRD dialysis patients your practice was treating as of September 30, 1982.	339	9.5	3.8
(2)	The equivalent number of ESRD dialysis patients you personally covered for the practice as of September 30, 1982.	320	3.0 ^d	0.7
(3)	During the last 6 months, the average number of dialysis treatments or exchanges each of the patients handled by your practice received each month.	185	116.5	27.4
(4)	During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	189	1.8 ⁱ	0.1
(5)	During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	195	1.7 ⁱ	0.0
(6)	During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	205	2.3	0.1

<u>Home CCPD</u>		<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1)	The number of ESRD dialysis patients your practice was treating as of September 30, 1982.	339	0.4	0.0
(2)	The equivalent number of ESRD dialysis patients you personally covered for the practice as of September 30, 1982.	335	0.2 ^d	0.0
(3)	During the last 6 months, the average number of dialysis treatments or exchanges each of the patients handled by your practice received each month.	31	d	d
(4)	During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	42	1.3 ^j	0.8
(5)	During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	43	1.2 ^j	0.1
(6)	During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	41	2.2	0.1

Question 5: Outpatient care for in-facility patients

An ESRD medical practice involves performing a number of activities for patients who receive outpatient dialysis in a free-standing or hospital-based dialysis facility; some activities take more time than others. In your ESRD medical practice, on the average, what amount of the following types of care related to renal disease did your medical practice's dialysis patients receive from any dialysis physician during the past 6 months?

The physicians were asked to show the degree of care provided for each of the seven types of outpatient care listed below. The sampling errors in all instances were 0.1 percent or less.

	Degree of care provided				
	<u>Very great</u>	<u>Great</u>	<u>Mod- erate</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>
(1) Reviewing laboratory test:					
Number of responses	43	70	151	54	1
Projected percent ^k	14.2	18.5	50.0	16.7	0.0
(2) Providing psychological support to patients:					
Number of responses	46	119	114	38	2
Projected percent ^k	14.9	29.4	33.0	21.7	0.1
(3) Prescribing medication:					
Number of responses	24	72	116	102	5
Projected percent ^k	6.2	15.7	39.9	35.7	1.1
(4) Examining ESRD patient:					
Number of responses	28	104	158	26	2
Projected percent ^k	7.4	23.4	58.6	7.9	0.9
(5) Consulting with patients about their care, progress, laboratory test results, etc:					
Number of responses	49	142	116	11	1
Projected percent ^k	14.0	43.5	34.9	6.7	0.0
(6) Consulting with nurses about patients:					
Number of responses	64	124	112	17	2
Projected percent ^k	16.9	38.5	37.1	6.6	0.1
(7) Consulting with other physicians about ESRD dialysis patient care:					
Number of responses	19	48	123	107	22
Projected percent ^k	7.1	13.6	34.3	38.0	6.4

Question 6: Home patient care

An ESRD medical practice involves performing a number of activities for patients who receive dialysis at home; some activities take more time than others. In your ESRD medical practice, on the average, what amount of the following types of care related to renal disease did your medical practice's dialysis patients receive from any dialysis physician during the past 6 months?

The physicians were asked to show the degree of care provided for each of the seven types of outpatient care listed below. The sampling errors in all instances were 0.1 percent or less.

	Degree of care provided				
	<u>Very great</u>	<u>Great</u>	<u>Mod- erate</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>
(1) Reviewing laboratory tests:					
Number of responses	19	47	124	78	1
Projected percent ^k	6.2	14.8	48.5	28.9	0.0
(2) Providing psychological support to patients:					
Number of responses	21	56	108	70	14
Projected percent ^k	7.1	20.9	32.0	34.6	3.2
(3) Prescribing medication:					
Number of responses	7	36	109	103	14
Projected percent ^k	0.8	15.3	30.6	47.1	4.0
(4) Examining ESRD patient:					
Number of responses	10	41	133	82	3
Projected percent ^k	5.3	13.8	45.6	34.0	0.1
(5) Consulting with patients about their care, progress, laboratory tests results, etc:					
Number of responses	28	59	140	39	3
Projected percent ^k	6.1	28.1	47.3	16.4	0.1
(6) Consulting with nurses about patients:					
Number of responses	33	60	85	68	23
Projected percent ^k	12.8	22.6	34.1	22.0	6.9
(7) Consulting with other physicians about ESRD dialysis patient care:					
Number of responses	8	25	68	127	41
Projected percent ^k	4.8	5.2	22.3	53.4	12.0

Question 7: Proportion of direct and indirect care

Consider the amount of time spent providing care to ESRD dialysis patients. About what proportion of your medical practice's time during the past 6 months was spent providing (1) direct patient care (include contacts with patients over the telephone and during dialysis, office visits, and hospitalization) and (2) care not provided directly to ESRD patients (include review of laboratory reports, consultations with nurses, etc.)?

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Direct care	302	66.3	3.6
Indirect care	303	32.1	3.6

Question 8: Direct patient care

Please estimate the amount of time per month each dialysis patient in your medical practice is seen by a dialysis physician. (In your estimate, include all contacts with patients over the telephone and during dialysis, office visits, and hospitalization.)

The physicians were asked to provide this information for patients who dialyzed (1) in free-standing facilities, (2) in hospital-based facilities, and (3) at home. The sampling errors in each instance were 0.1 or less.

Dialysis Setting

	<u>Free-standing facility</u>		<u>Hospital-based facility</u>		<u>Home</u>	
	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>
Less than 15 minutes	6	2.3	1	1.0	6	2.5
At least 15 minutes, but less than 1/2 hour	10	6.7	7	5.6	28	17.0
At least 1/2 hour, but less than 1 hour	18	6.3	22	9.6	83	35.5
At least 1 hour, but less than 2 hours	61	38.2	38	24.9	72	19.1
At least 2 hours, but less than 3 hours	59	25.6	57	23.8	49	15.5
3 hours or more	62	14.3	99	32.0	20	7.9

Question 9: Indirect patient care

Please estimate the amount of time per month each dialysis patient in your medical practice was provided indirect care by a dialysis physician. (In your estimate, include all indirect care provided, e.g., review of laboratory reports, consultations with nurses, etc.).

The physicians were asked to provide this information for patients who dialyzed (1) in free-standing facilities, (2) in hospital-based facilities, and (3) at home. The sampling errors in each instance were 0.1 or less.

Dialysis Setting

	<u>Free-standing facility</u>		<u>Hospital-based facility</u>		<u>Home</u>	
	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>
Less than 15 minutes	13	4.5	8	7.2	36	22.6
At least 15 minutes, but less than 1/2 hour	42	22.3	28	13.1	47	11.0
At least 1/2 hour, but less than 1 hour	58	30.8	48	24.1	81	31.7
At least 1 hour, but less than 2 hours	54	24.9	68	22.8	53	12.9
At least 2 hours, but less than 3 hours	11	7.0	35	20.0	19	8.0
3 hours or more	38	7.2	37	9.8	20	8.1

Question 10: Ratio of home to facility patients treated

Currently, HCFA's ESRD physician reimbursement criteria assumes that a physician can care for 10 home dialysis patients using the same time and personnel resources it would take for 7 free-standing facility or hospital-based dialysis patients.

Do you agree or disagree with the above physician reimbursement ratio criteria?

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Agree	200	63.9	0.3
Disagree	124	35.5	.3

Question 11: Suggested ratio of home to facility patients

If you disagree, what home to free-standing/hospital-based facility ratio do you think is more appropriate?

Number of responses: 114

	<u>Estimated ratio^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Home patients to Free-standing or hospital-based patients	10 to 7	2.9 to 2.3

Question 12: Incentive to treat ESRD patients in facilities

Some people believe that HCFA's current practice of reimbursing more for a physician to treat free-standing/hospital-based dialysis patients than home dialysis patients encourages more treatments at facilities. To what degree do you agree or disagree that HCFA's reimbursement practice acts as an incentive to treat ESRD dialysis patients at free-standing or hospital-based dialysis facilities?

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Strongly agree	53	15.3	0.0
Somewhat agree	75	24.7	.0
Do agree/do not agree	33	10.0	.0
Somewhat disagree	60	16.2	.3
Strongly disagree	113	33.2	2.6

Questions 13 through 15:

HCFA has proposed changing the method used to calculate the Alternative Reimbursement Method (ARM) form of payment. Specifically, physicians would receive the same monthly payment for both free-standing/hospital-based and home dialysis outpatients based upon a weighted formula that accounts for the proportion of patients dialyzing at home. HCFA estimates that the average reimbursement amount would range from \$149 to \$219, or a national average of \$184.

Question 13: Support for single rate

Regardless of the reimbursement amount, to what extent would you support the single reimbursement formula method for both free-standing/hospital-based and home dialysis patients?

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Very great extent	46	16.4	0.3
Great extent	59	14.1	.2
Moderate extent	71	22.2	.2
Some extent	61	21.6	.3
Little or no extent	98	26.2	.2

Question 14: If the proposed reimbursement formula was implemented, how adequate, in your opinion, is the proposed \$184 average reimbursement amount?

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected percent^k</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Very much more than adequate	3	1.8	0.0
More than adequate	5	0.2	.0
Adequate	62	16.4	.1
Less than adequate	168	59.7	.3
Very much less than adequate	95	21.3	.3

Question 15: What average reimbursement amount would you propose?

<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Estimate^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
273	\$241	\$61	\$552	\$100

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SELECTED FOR COMPARISON WITH BENEFICIARY QUESTIONNAIRES

The patients and physicians in our survey were asked to answer selected questions, which were the same or similar so the answers could be compared to determine the similarity of the responses given. The questions selected for this purpose and the responses given by physicians in eight of the states covered by our review are given below. Because all physicians in this

group were sent questionnaires, actual responses are reported and there is no need for sampling errors.

Question 4: Size of ESRD practice and frequency of patient contacts

Consider your medical practice with the various types of ESRD dialysis patients who received outpatient care in the past 6 months. Listed below are questions concerning these patients and your contacts with them.

The physicians were asked to provide this information for patients in various treatment settings and by mode of treatment for home patients.

	<u>Free-standing facilities</u>		<u>Hospital-based facilities</u>	
	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Average</u>
During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	67	10.2	96	10.8
During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	71	1.6	92	2.6
During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	71	2.4	93	2.3

	<u>Home (hemodialysis)</u>		<u>Home (IPD)</u>	
	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Average</u>
During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your prac- tice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	67	0.9	11	1.7
During the last 6 months, other than during dial- ysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dial- ysis physician each month.	73	1.5	12	1.2
During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	69	1.9	10	3.2

	Home (CAPD)		Home (CCPD)	
	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Average</u>
During the last 6 months, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician during dialysis each month.	74	1.7	14	0.5
During the last 6 months, other than during dialysis, the average number of times each patient handled by your practice was met and spoken to by any dialysis physician each month.	81	1.7	14	1.1
During the last 6 months, the average number of telephone contacts each patient in the medical practice had with any dialysis physician each month.	81	2.9	12	2.8

Question 5: Outpatient care for in-facility patients

An ESRD medical practice involves performing a number of activities for patients who receive dialysis at home; some activities take more time than others. In your ESRD medical practice, on the average, what amount of the following types of care related to renal disease did your medical practice's dialysis patients receive from any dialysis physician during the past 6 months?

	Degree of care provided					Total
	<u>Very great</u>	<u>Great</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>	
Prescribing medication:						
Number of responses	9	27	46	33	2	117
Percent	7.7	23.1	39.3	28.2	1.7	100.0
Providing psychological support to patients:						
Number of responses	19	46	43	8	1	117
Percent	16.2	39.3	36.8	6.8	0.9	100.0
Consulting with ESRD patients about their progress, laboratory test results, etc:						
Number of responses	21	45	49	2	0	117
Percent	17.9	38.5	41.9	1.7	0	100.0
Examining ESRD patients:						
Number of responses	9	42	55	11	0	117
Percent	7.7	35.9	47.0	9.4	0	100.0

Question 6: Outpatient care for home patients

An ESRD medical practice involves performing a number of activities for patients who receive dialysis at home; some activities take more time than others. In your ESRD medical practice, on the average, what amount of the following types of care related to renal disease did your medical practice's dialysis patients receive from any dialysis physician during the past 6 months?

	Degree of care provided					Total
	<u>Very great</u>	<u>Great</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Little</u>	
Prescribing medication:						
Number of responses	4	12	46	39	6	107
Percent ¹	3.7	11.2	43.0	36.4	5.6	99.9
Providing psychological support to patients:						
Number of responses	12	21	40	25	9	107
Percent	11.2	19.6	37.4	23.4	8.4	100.0
Consulting with ESRD patients about their progress, laboratory test results, etc:						
Number of responses	12	22	55	16	2	107
Percent ¹	11.2	20.6	51.4	15.0	1.9	100.1
Examining ESRD patients:						
Number of responses	2	19	49	35	2	107
Percent ¹	1.9	17.8	45.8	32.7	1.9	100.1

Question 7: Direct patient care

Please estimate the amount of time per month each patient in your medical practice is seen by a dialysis physician. (In your estimate, include all contacts with patients over the telephone and during dialysis, office visit, and hospitalization.)

Amount of time per patient	Free-standing facility patients		Hospital-based facility patients		Home patients	
	Number of responses	Percent ¹	Number of responses	Percent ¹	Number of responses	Percent ¹
Less than 15 minutes	1	1.5	0	0	1	1
At least 15 minutes, but less than 1/2 hour	0	0	2	2.1	9	8.8
At least 1/2 hour, but less than 1 hour	4	6	4	4.2	37	36.3
At least 1 hour, but less than 2 hours	20	29.9	9	9.4	34	33.3
At least 2 hours, but less than 3 hours	23	34.3	34	35.4	13	12.7
3 hours or more	<u>19</u>	<u>28.4</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>49.0</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7.8</u>
Total	<u>67</u>	<u>100.1</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>100.1</u>	<u>102</u>	<u>99.9</u>

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO QUESTIONNAIRE
DATA IN APPENDIX I

- ^aThe estimates were calculated by combining universe results from the 10-state group with those of the 40-state sample.
- ^bAll sampling errors were calculated at the 95-percent confidence level. Sampling errors represent the range (+,-) about the estimate within which 95 percent of the values would fall if a larger sample had been drawn.
- ^cThe results were not reported because the sampling error was too great (in excess of 100 percent).
- ^dNumber of patients for whom the respondent was primary physician. Example: If a group of 4 physicians in practice have 100 patients, we assigned 25 patients per physician unless another reasonable answer was listed.
- ^eThe total average number of contacts was 12.2. This is the projected average of the sum of the responses to questions 4(4) and 4(5). Only the responses from physicians who answered both 4(4) and 4(5) were included in the projection. The sampling error is 0.8 at the 95-percent confidence level.
- ^fThe total average number of direct contacts was 12.5. This is the projected average of the sum of the responses to questions 4(4) and 4(5). Only the responses from physicians who answered both 4(4) and 4(5) were included in the projection. The sampling error is 0.8 at the 95-percent confidence level.
- ^gThe total number of direct contacts was 2.4. This is the projected average of the sum of the responses to 4(4) and 4(5). Only the responses from physicians who answered both 4(4) and 4(5) were included in the projection. The sampling error is 0.1 at the 95-percent confidence level.
- ^hThe total average number of direct contacts was 1.3. This is the projected average of the sum of the responses to 4(4) and 4(5). Only the responses from physicians who answered both 4(4) and 4(5) were included in the projection. The sampling error is 0.1 at the 95-percent confidence level.
- ⁱThe total average number of direct contacts was 3.4. This is the projected average of the sum of the responses to 4(4) and 4(5). Only the responses from physicians who answered both 4(4) and 4(5) were included in the projection. The sampling error is 0.2 at the 95-percent confidence level.

J The total average number of direct contacts was 2.4. This is the projected average of the sum of the responses to 4(4) and 4(5). Only the responses from physicians who answered both 4(4) and 4(5) were included in the projection. The sampling error is 0.5 at the 95-percent confidence level.

K These percentages do not total 100 because each number is an independent projection. Projected percentages were calculated by combining responses from physicians in the 10-state group with projected estimates from the 40-state physician sample and dividing the results by 2,066, our estimate of the total number of ESRD physicians.

L Percentages do not total to 100 due to rounding.

RESULTS OF BENEFICIARYQUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

In January 1983, we mailed questionnaires to 871 ESRD patients in 8 of the 10 states. The purpose of the questionnaire was to

- identify types of services provided,
- estimate the number of contacts with physicians,
- estimate the length of direct time beneficiaries spend with physicians, and
- obtain opinions regarding the type of care received.

PRETEST

The questionnaire was pretested with five patients in the Boston, Massachusetts, and Baltimore, Maryland, areas. While being timed by a trained GAO observer, patients in the pretest completed the questionnaire as if they had received it in the mail. We used a standardized approach in eliciting subjects' descriptions of the various difficulties and issues encountered as they completed each item.

Based on the results of the pretest, we revised the questionnaire to help ensure that all questions were fair, relevant, easy to answer, and relatively free of design flaws that could introduce bias or error into the study results. The responses to the pretest were not used for the final report.

METHODOLOGY

Beneficiaries in two states, Arkansas and Massachusetts, were treated by physicians reimbursed under both the initial method and ARM. Beneficiaries in the other six states were all treated by physicians under the ARM. A statistically selected sample was taken for each group. Based on information provided by the four¹ carriers administering the program, we identified all ESRD patients in the eight states for whom there were dialysis charges in 1981. The universe was then adjusted for patients who had died, had received kidney transplants, or were

¹Aetna Life and Casualty Company, Arkansas Blue Shield, Massachusetts Physician Services, and Rhode Island Blue Shield.

no longer on dialysis. The universe and adjusted universe for each group was determined as follows:

<u>State</u>	<u>Number of beneficiaries</u>	
	<u>Total universe</u>	<u>Adjusted universe</u>
<u>Initial method:</u>		
Arkansas	203	178
Massachusetts	<u>236</u>	<u>173</u>
Subtotal	<u>439</u>	<u>351</u>
<u>ARM:</u>		
Alaska	46	46
Arizona	681	547
Arkansas	197	185
Hawaii	607	412
Massachusetts	1,526	1,272
Nevada	246	205
Oregon	577	538
Rhode Island	<u>401</u>	<u>244</u>
Total	<u>4,720</u>	<u>3,800</u>

We mailed questionnaires to 871 beneficiaries. All 439 beneficiaries in Massachusetts and Arkansas, whose physicians were reimbursed under the initial method, were sent a questionnaire. In addition, a sample of 432 beneficiaries, whose physicians were reimbursed under the ARM, were sent questionnaires. The sample was stratified by state, and the sample size was designed to achieve sampling errors of no more than ± 5 percent at the 95-percent confidence level. An original questionnaire, two follow-up mailings, and a mailgram encompassed our data collection efforts.

Of the 871 beneficiaries in the sample, 195 could not be located, had died, or had received kidney transplants. In total, we received 583 responses (or about 86 percent) of the 676 adjusted sample. Information on the questionnaires mailed and responses received is shown in the following table.

The Initial and Adjusted
Sample Size and Responses Received

	<u>Number of beneficiaries</u>			<u>Adjusted sample</u>	<u>Number of responses received</u>	<u>Response rate (percent)</u>
	<u>Initial sample</u>	<u>Unable to locate</u>	<u>Deceased/ trans- planted</u>			
<u>Initial method:</u>						
Arkansas	203	0	25	178	162	91
Massachusetts	236	05	63	168	139	83
<u>ARM:</u>						
Alaska	02	0	0	02	01	50
Arizona	56	05	11	40	34	85
Arkansas	18	02	01	15	14	93
Hawaii	65	02	12	51	41	80
Massachusetts	156	07	26	123	107	87
Nevada	30	03	05	22	16	73
Oregon	59	03	04	52	48	92
Rhode Island	<u>46</u>	<u>03</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>21</u>	84
Total	<u>871</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>165</u>	<u>676</u>	<u>583</u>	86

BENEFICIARIES' RESPONSES

To give us an overall perspective for the eight states, we combined responses from the initial and ARM reimbursement groups. This was accomplished through the appropriate weighting and statistical estimating techniques to project responses to the adjusted universe. Shown below are projected estimates based on responses to the questions asked.

Question 1: Length of time on dialysis

How long have you been receiving dialysis treatments?

Number of responses	567
Average length of time ^a	c
Sampling error ^b	c

^aAll explanatory notes are on the last page of this appendix.

Question 2: Dialysis setting

Where do you normally receive your dialysis treatment?

	<u>Dialysis facility</u>	<u>Hospital</u>	<u>Home</u>
Number of responses	260	176	141
Projected percent ^a	57.5	19.5	23.0
Sampling error ^b	5.2	3.9	4.5

Question 3: Dialysis mode

Currently what type of dialysis treatment do you receive?

	<u>CAPD</u>	<u>CCPD</u>	<u>Hemo</u>	<u>IPD</u>
Number of responses	62	10	467	7
Projected percent ^a	8.6	c	90.4	c
Sampling error ^b	2.95	c	3.1	c

Questions 4 and 5: Hospitalization

(4) Were you hospitalized during the period January 1, 1981, to September 30, 1982?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Number of responses	445	128
Projected percent ^a	75.2	24.8
Sampling error ^b	4.7	4.7

(5) How many times were you hospitalized between January 1, 1981, and September 1982?

Number of responses	429
Average ^a	2.7
Sampling error ^b	1.4

Question 6: Inpatient dialysis treatment

During the time you were hospitalized, did you receive dialysis treatments?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Number of responses	426	21
Projected percent ^a	92.2	6.5
Sampling error ^b	3.1	3.1

Question 7: Inpatient care

If you were hospitalized between January 1, 1981, and September 30, 1982, consider the most recent hospitalization and answer the following questions.

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1) The number of days you were in the hospital.	413	c	c
(2) The number of dialysis treatments you received while in the hospital.	409	c	c
(3) The number of times you met and spoke to a dialysis physician during dialysis while in the hospital.	393	c	c
(4) Other than during dialysis treatment, the number of times you met and spoke to a dialysis physician while in the hospital.	376	c	c
(5) The number of times you spoke to a dialysis physician on the telephone while in the hospital.	386	.17	.15

Question 8: In-facility or in-hospital dialysis treatments

We asked beneficiaries who were receiving regular out-patient dialysis treatment at a hospital or facility to answer the following questions.

If you had dialysis treatments in the past 6 months, please consider the contacts you had with a dialysis physician and respond to the following.

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1) The average number of dialysis treatments you received each month.	419	12.0	0.2
(2) The average number of times a dialysis physician met and spoke with you during dialysis each month. ^d	412	8.9	2.1
(4) Other than during dialysis, the average number of times a dialysis physician met and spoke with you each month. ^d	388	1.4	1.0
(5) The average number of telephone contacts you had with a dialysis physician each month.	376	0.7	0.4

In addition, beneficiaries were asked how much time the physician spent with them, as follows:

- (3) The average length of time you spoke with a dialysis physician while on dialysis each month.

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Never met	20	3.0	2.3
Less than 15 minutes	222	56.7	6.5
At least 15 minutes, but less than 1/2 hour	99	24.6	5.6
At least 1/2 hour, but less than 1 hour	27	5.1	2.9
At least 1 hour, but less than 2 hours	26	7.9	3.6
More than 2 hours	11	2.7	2.1

We also asked the beneficiaries how much time the physicians spent with them during the month for all contacts, as follows:

The average length of time you spoke with a dialysis physician during the month. (Include all contacts during dialysis, office visits, and over the telephone--items 2, 3, 4, and 5 above.)

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^{a,e}</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Never spoke	3	c	c
Less than 15 minutes	109	31.1	5.9
At least 15 minutes, but less than 1/2 hour	106	22.7	5.5
At least 1/2 hour, but less than 1 hour	65	15.0	4.8
At least 1 hour, but less than 2 hours	69	17.5	4.9
More than 2 hours	50	13.1	4.5

Question 9: Home dialysis treatment

If you had outpatient dialysis treatments in the past 6 months, please consider the contacts you had with a dialysis physician and respond to the following.

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^a</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
(1) The average number of dialysis treatments you receive each month.	122	c	c
(2) The average number of times a dialysis physician met and spoke with you each month. ^f	132	1.3	0.8
(3) The average number of telephone contacts you had with a dialysis physician each month. ^f	125	1.3	0.6

We also asked the beneficiaries to indicate the length of time they spoke with a physician each month, as follows:

(4) The average length of time you spoke with a dialysis physician during the month. (Includes all contacts during office visits and over the telephone--items 2 and 3 above.)

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^{a,e}</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Never spoke	1	c	c
Less than 15 minutes	37	28.9	10.5
At least 15 minutes, but less than 1/2 hour	40	30.3	10.5
At least 1/2 hour, but less than 1 hour	32	17.0	7.8
At least 1 hour, but less than 2 hours	19	15.0	7.1
More than 2 hours	4	3.3	3.8

Question 10: Type of care received

Consider all the forms of routine contact in the past 6 months that you have had with the physician who treats you for renal disease. To what extent, if at all, did your physician provide the following types of patient care?

Prescribed medication.

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^{a,e}</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Very great	54	9.7	3.4
Great	92	17.1	4.3
Moderate	172	33.3	5.4
Some	126	23.5	4.9
Little	96	16.4	4.2

Discussed your personal problems relating to renal disease with you.

Very great	95	19.9	4.7
Great	101	20.0	4.5
Moderate	113	20.6	4.7
Some	133	22.6	4.8
Little	99	16.9	4.3

Informed you of your progress.

	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Projected average^{a, e}</u>	<u>Sampling error^b</u>
Very great	59	13.4	4.0
Great	90	16.7	4.3
Moderate	131	25.0	5.0
Some	154	26.6	4.9
Little	107	18.3	4.4

Examined you.

Very great	53	12.7	4.0
Great	93	18.1	4.2
Moderate	171	29.3	5.3
Some	120	22.1	4.7
Little	99	17.7	4.2

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO QUESTIONNAIRE
DATA IN APPENDIX II

^aProjected averages and percentages are based on our adjusted universe of 3,449 ARM beneficiaries plus the number of initial method beneficiaries that responded to the question.

^bAll sampling errors were calculated at the 95-percent confidence level. Sampling errors represent the range (+,-) about the estimate within which 95 percent of the values would fall if a larger samples had been drawn.

^cThe results were not reported because the sampling error was too great (in excess of 100 percent).

^dThe total average number of direct contacts was 10.2. This is the projected average of the sum of the responses to questions 8(2) and 8(4). Only the responses from beneficiaries who answered both 8(2) and 8(4) were included in the projection. The sampling error is 3.5 at the 95-percent confidence level.

^ePercentages may not total 100 percent because each category is an independent statistical projection.

^fThe total average number of direct contacts was 2.5. This is the projected average of the sum of 9(2) and 9(3). Only the responses from beneficiaries who answered both 9(2) and 9(3) were included in the projections. The sampling error is 1.4 at the 95-percent confidence level.

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