2016 AMA Prior Authorization Physician Survey

Survey Methodology

- 24-question, web-based survey administered in December 2016
- Sample of 1000 practicing physicians drawn from M3 panel
- 40% primary care physicians/60% specialists
- Sample screened to ensure that all participating physicians:
  — Are currently practicing in the United States
  — Provide 20+ hours of patient care per week
  — Complete prior authorizations (PAs) during a typical week of practice

Physician Perspective on PA Burdens

**Question:** How would you describe the burden associated with PA for the physicians and staff in your practice?

- 75% Low or extremely low
- 18% Neither high nor low
- 6% High or extremely high

Number of PAs Per Week

**Question:** Please provide your best estimate of the number of prescription and medical services PAs completed by you yourself and/or your staff for your patients in the last week. Do not include PAs that practice staff completed for the patients of other physicians in your practice.

- 0–5 PAs: 14%
- 6–10 PAs: 17%
- 11–20 PAs: 23%
- 21–40 PAs: 23%
- Over 40 PAs: 23%

**Mean:** 36.6 PAs

Hours Spent on PA Per Week

**Question:** Thinking about all of the PAs you and your staff completed in the last week, please provide your best estimate of the number of hours spent on processing these PAs.

- 0–2 hrs: 13%
- 3–5 hrs: 23%
- 6–10 hrs: 23%
- 11–20 hrs: 19%
- Over 20 hrs: 22%

**Mean:** 16.4 hrs
Care Delays Associated With PA

**Question:** For those patients whose treatment requires PA, how often does this process delay access to necessary care?

- **44%** report caring delays
- **46%**
- **9%**

PA Staffing Burdens

**Question:** Do you have staff members who work exclusively on PAs?

- **34%**
- **64%**
- **2%** Don’t know

Average Wait Time for PA Responses

**Question:** In the last week, how long on average did your practice need to wait for a PA decision from health plans?

- **7%** Less than 1 hour
- **15%** A few hours
- **11%** More than a few hours, less than 1 business day
- **33%** 1–2 business days
- **20%** 3–5 business days
- **6%** More than 5 business days
- **7%** Don’t know

Nearly 60% report waiting at least 1 business day.

26% report waiting at least 3 business days.

Other Key Takeaways

- Surveyed physicians reported that **79%** of their PA requests are eventually approved
  - **72%** approved on initial request
  - **7%** approved on appeal
- **Eighty percent** reported they are sometimes, often, or always required to repeat PAs for prescription medications when a patient is stabilized on a treatment for a chronic condition
- Most commonly reported ways for completing both medical and prescription PAs were **fax** and **telephone**

For information on the AMA’s advocacy efforts and resources to reduce PA burdens, please visit ama-assn.org and search for “prior authorization.”