

Do you spend more time on administrative tasks than your peers?

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As a physician you know the time you spend on paperwork and administrative tasks has exploded since the rise of the electronic health record (EHR). But just how much time are your peers spending on doctor paperwork and how does your workload stack up to theirs?

The authors of a new report that collected data from more than 20,000 physicians in nearly 30 specialties described the time physicians are spending on these tasks as “mind-boggling.” Nearly a third of physicians said they spend 20 hours or more a week on paperwork and administrative tasks, according to the *Medscape Physician Compensation Report 2018*, an annual report that looks at U.S. physician compensation and other work environment factors.

In all, 70 percent of survey respondents said that in 2018 they spend 10 hours or more weekly on paperwork and administrative tasks. That’s up significantly over last year, when 57 percent of respondents to the 2017 survey reported spending 10 hours or more on these items.

Where do you fit in?

Here is a more detailed breakdown of the hours physicians said they spend per week on paperwork and administration in 2018. The numbers do not add up to 100 because of rounding.

- Less than five hours—11 percent.
- Five to nine hours—18 percent.
- 10 to 19 hours—38 percent.
- 20 or more hours—32 percent.

What about time to see patients?

While physicians are dedicating more time to administrative tasks and paperwork, survey data from the past several years shows that the time they spend seeing patients has not changed much during that time. Here is a breakdown of the hours physicians reported seeing patients each week, according to the report.

- More than 30 hours—14 percent.
- 30–45 hours—56 percent.
- 46–55 hours—15 percent.
- 56–65 hours—9 percent.
- More than 65 hours—5 percent.

Strategies to reduce paperwork time

The AMA offers resources to help physicians cut the time they spend on the administrative side of medicine.

The AMA STEPS Forward™ module on EHR in-basket restructuring helps physicians more effectively manage their in-baskets by outlining six steps they can take to create an optimal and orderly in-basket. These include identifying the types of messages that could be routed to other team members; creating a team pool and team pool in-basket to help redistribute and streamline work; and developing workflows for common in-basket tasks.

Another module on team documentation helps physicians learn how to implement the team documentation process—also called scribing—so the physician can be freed up to focus on the patient. Team documentation creates an environment where a staff member assists in the exam room by documenting visit notes, entering orders and referrals and queuing up prescriptions while the physician talks to and examines the patient.

Committed to making physician burnout a thing of the past, the AMA has studied, and is addressing, issues causing and fueling physician burnout—including time constraints, technology and regulations—to better understand the challenges physicians face.

AMA's STEPS Forward is an open-access platform featuring more than 50 modules that offer actionable, expert-driven strategies and insights supported by practical resources and tools. Based on best practices from the field, STEPS Forward modules empower practices to identify areas or opportunities for improvement, set meaningful and achievable goals, and implement transformative



changes designed to increase operational efficiencies, elevate clinical team engagement, and improve patient care.

Several modules have been developed from the generous grant funding of the federal Transforming Clinical Practices Initiative (TCPI), an effort designed to help clinicians achieve large-scale health transformation through TCPI's Practice Transformation Networks.

The AMA, in collaboration with TCPI, is providing technical assistance and peer-level support by way of STEPS Forward resources to enrolled practices. The AMA is also engaging the national physician community in health care transformation through network projects, change packages, success stories and training modules.