Developing a Prescription for Physician Surveys
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The Study

Objective
Provide baseline information about physician attitudes and behaviors related to practicing medicine

Design and Methods
• Sample Frame
  – 2003 American Medical Association (AMA) Master File
  – Sample Size: N=3,504 (584 in six specialties)
• Design and Methods
  – Short, self-administered mail questionnaire
  – Pre-paid incentive ($20)
  – USPS priority mailer
  – Pre-paid business reply mailing
  – Multiple contact attempts
  – Anonymity of response
• Response Rates
  – 57.8% Total
  – 65.8% Pediatrics
  – 58.2% Anesthesiology
  – 57.7% General Surgery
  – 55.3% Family Practice
  – 52.6% Internal Medicine
  – 42.6% Cardiology

The Findings

Summary of Contacts and Returns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Contact</th>
<th>Type of Contact</th>
<th>Number Returned (Percent of Total Returns)</th>
<th>Cumulative Return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2003</td>
<td>First Priority Mailing</td>
<td>605 (33%)</td>
<td>605 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2003</td>
<td>First Reminder Postcard</td>
<td>790 (42%)</td>
<td>1,594 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2004</td>
<td>Second Priority Mailing</td>
<td>231 (13%)</td>
<td>1,825 (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February – May 2004</td>
<td>Multiple Contact Attempt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Multiple contact attempts included a second reminder postcard and reminder telephone calls.

Medical Specialty

- Anesthesiology
- Cardiology
- Family Practice
- General Surgery
- Internal Medicine
- Pediatrics
- Psychiatry

Conclusions

Methodology Best Practices
• Recommend priority mail
• Low risk to pre-paid incentives
• Telephone reminders aid identification of eligibles

Costs and Benefits of Improving Response Rates
• Little variation in demographic, behavioral, and sensitive questions by level of contact
• Additional cost to improve the response rate did not alter survey results
• Tradeoff of the costs in time and money to improve response rates may have diminishing returns

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