

Monthly



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VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Preliminary Data

FROM THE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: May 1973-April 1974

INTRODUCTION

During the period May 1973-April 1974, there were an estimated 644.9 million office visits made to "office-based, patient care" physicians in the coterminous United States, resulting in an average of 3.1 office visits per person per year. These and other estimates presented in this report are based on data collected from a national sample of office-based physicians in the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS).

This report contains preliminary data derived from NAMCS conducted by the Division of Health Resources Utilization Statistics of the National Center for Health Statistics during May 1973-April 1974. The NAMCS was designed to meet the needs and demands for objective, reliable information about the provision and use of ambulatory medical care services in the United States. The sampling frame for the survey is a list of licensed physicians in "office-based, patient care" practice compiled from files that are classified and maintained by the American Medical Association (AMA) and American Osteopathic Association (AOA). The physicians surveyed for NAMCS currently exclude those whose specialty is anesthesiology, pathology, and radiology, and those in government service.

In addition to the cooperation and assistance provided by the AMA and AOA, a close liaison has been maintained between survey officials and 17 other national medical organizations. All of these organizations have given their strong support, cooperation, and endorsement to NAMCS, and it is largely through their efforts that a viable NAMCS has evolved. A complete description of the background and survey methodology has been

published in an earlier report entitled "National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: Background and Methodology, United States, 1967-1972," *Vital and Health Statistics*, DHEW Publication No. (HRA) 74-1335, Series 2, No. 61.

Data Highlights

Data from table 1 reveal that 40.4 percent of all office visits were made to general and family practitioners, 26.3 percent to medical specialists, 28.5 percent to surgical specialists, and 4.9 percent to all other specialists. Some three out of every five office visits were made to physicians in solo practice.

An estimated 575.9 million office visits were made by white patients, and 69 million by patients in all other color groups. For both color groups, the annual number of office visits per person increased with age (figure 1). While the visit rate for whites appeared higher than the all other rate in four of the five age groups, only the rates for children (under 15 years of age) and the aged (65 years and over) were significantly different.

Ambulatory care utilization by geographic region and metropolitan or nonmetropolitan location of the physician's practice is presented in table 2. The percent of total U.S. office visits ranges from 18.1 percent in the West Region to 31.5 percent in the south. While there was wide regional variation in the distribution of the number of visits, there was no significant difference in the annual visit rate for the four regions. Approximately three-fourths of all office visits were made to physicians in metropolitan areas. The office visit rate for the 1-year period was greater in the metropolitan than the non-metropolitan area, 3.4 and 2.5 office visits per person per year, respectively.

Figure 1. Number of office visits to office-based physicians per person per year, by age and color: United States, May 1973-April 1974.

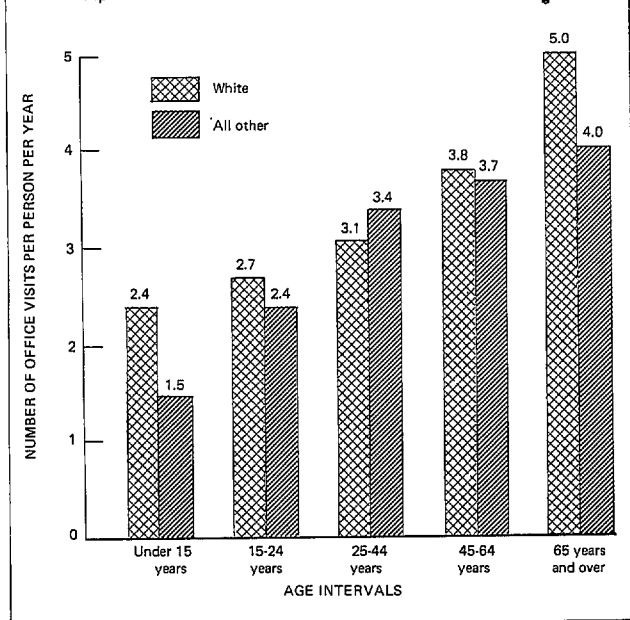
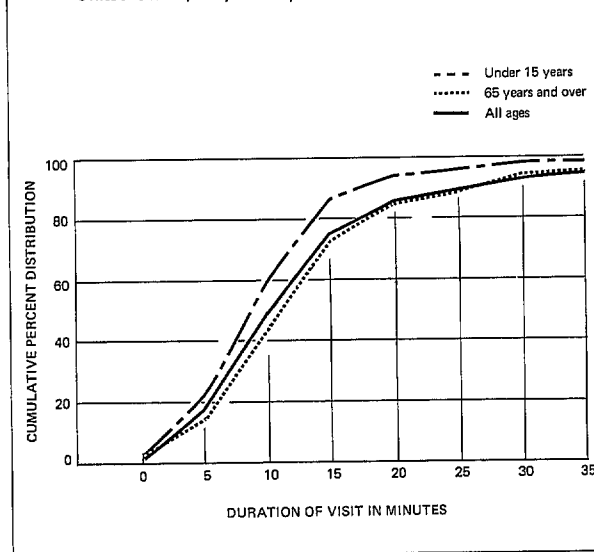


Figure 2. Cumulative percent distribution of office visits to office-based physicians by selected age groups and duration of visit: United States, May 1973-April 1974.



Data on the diagnosis associated with each ambulatory visit are given in tables 3 and 4. The diagnostic data in table 3 are shown by the classes of the *Eighth Revision International Classification of Diseases, Adapted for Use in the United States (ICDA)*. Of the 17 ICDA classes, four accounted for approximately half of all visits. These were the special conditions and examinations without sickness, 17.1 percent; diseases of the respiratory system, 15.1 percent; diseases of the circulatory system, 9.2 percent; and diseases of the nervous system and sense organs, 7.9 percent. Table 4 provides additional insight into the office visit by presenting the 15 leading ICDA three-digit categories containing the physician's principal diagnosis.

Visit data from NAMCS are also classified according to broad types of treatments and services ordered or provided, and disposition and followup plans after the visit (tables 5 and 6). At approximately half of all office visits some drug therapy, either prescription or non-prescription drug, was ordered; no treatment was considered necessary for 5.3 percent of the visits. Other important treatments and services ordered were X-ray, 7.1 percent; laboratory procedure test, 19.6 percent; injection or immunization, 18.6 percent; and office surgery, 8.9 percent.

In 61.2 percent of all visits, the patient was told to return at a specified time, while 21.4 percent of the visits ended with instructions for the patient to return if necessary. No further followup was planned after 12.7 percent of the visits.

The 20 most common patient problems encountered by office-based physicians are shown in table 7. This information represents the patient's reasons for seeking medical care in the patient's own words. The coding of these responses was accomplished through the use of a special classification for coding presenting symptoms developed specifically for use in NAMCS. The symptom classification and rationale for its development has been published in a report "The National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: Symptom Classification," *Vital and Health Statistics*, DHEW Publication No. (HRA) 74-1337, Series 2, No. 63. The 20 most common problems or reasons for visit accounted for 62.4 percent of all office visits.

The duration of the office visit by age is shown as a cumulative percent distribution of all office visits during May 1973-April 1974 in figure 2. Visits lasting between 6-15 minutes accounted for 58 percent of all visits. The duration of visit was 15 minutes or less for 86 percent of all visits made by persons under 15 years of age.

MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table 1. Number and percent distribution of office visits to office-based physicians by sex, color, and age of patient, according to physician specialty and type of practice: United States, May 1973-April 1974

| Physician specialty and type of practice | Number of visits in thousands | Total | Sex | | Color | | Age | | | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|------|--------|-------|-----------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| | | | Male | Female | White | All other | Under 15 years | 15-24 years | 25-44 years | 45-64 years | 65 years and over |
| Percent distribution | | | | | | | | | | | |
| All specialties----- | 644,893 | 100.0 | 39.3 | 60.7 | 89.3 | 10.7 | 19.3 | 15.4 | 24.7 | 24.9 | 15.5 |
| General and family practice----- | 260,310 | 100.0 | 40.8 | 59.2 | 88.0 | 12.0 | 16.6 | 16.8 | 23.5 | 26.4 | 16.8 |
| Medical specialties----- | 169,316 | 100.0 | 44.4 | 55.6 | 88.4 | 11.6 | 34.5 | 11.1 | 15.7 | 22.7 | 16.0 |
| Internal medicine----- | 74,693 | 100.0 | 39.6 | 60.4 | 87.3 | 12.7 | 2.6 | 10.6 | 21.4 | 36.1 | 29.3 |
| Pediatrics----- | 53,659 | 100.0 | 52.9 | 47.1 | 89.9 | 10.1 | 93.5 | 4.4 | * | * | * |
| Other----- | 40,964 | 100.0 | 41.8 | 58.2 | 88.6 | 11.4 | 15.0 | 20.6 | 25.0 | 27.0 | 12.4 |
| Surgical specialties----- | 183,787 | 100.0 | 31.6 | 68.4 | 91.1 | 8.9 | 10.0 | 18.0 | 32.5 | 25.4 | 14.0 |
| General surgery----- | 44,846 | 100.0 | 39.4 | 60.6 | 90.9 | 9.1 | 9.3 | 13.4 | 25.7 | 33.6 | 18.0 |
| Obstetrics and gynecology----- | 50,715 | 100.0 | - | 100.0 | 87.9 | 12.1 | * | 31.6 | 54.2 | 11.2 | * |
| Other----- | 88,227 | 100.0 | 45.2 | 54.8 | 92.9 | 7.1 | 15.5 | 12.6 | 23.4 | 29.4 | 19.2 |
| Other specialties----- | 31,481 | 100.0 | 44.0 | 56.0 | 94.3 | 5.7 | 16.4 | 12.9 | 38.2 | 20.9 | 11.8 |
| Psychiatry----- | 20,300 | 100.0 | 43.8 | 56.2 | 95.7 | * | 17.8 | 13.9 | 48.0 | 17.6 | * |
| Other----- | 11,180 | 100.0 | 44.3 | 55.7 | 91.7 | * | 13.4 | 11.0 | 20.3 | 27.1 | 28.3 |
| Type of practice | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Solo----- | 386,208 | 100.0 | 39.1 | 60.9 | 88.3 | 11.7 | 17.2 | 15.5 | 25.0 | 26.2 | 16.2 |
| Other ¹ ----- | 258,685 | 100.0 | 39.6 | 60.4 | 90.8 | 9.2 | 22.8 | 15.4 | 24.3 | 22.9 | 14.6 |

¹Includes partnership and group practices.

Table 2. Number, percent distribution, and rate per person per year of office visits to office-based physicians by region and metropolitan or nonmetropolitan area, according to age, sex, and color of patient: United States, May 1973-April 1974

| Age, sex, and color | Number of visits in thousands | United States | Geographic region | | | | Metropolitan area | Nonmetropolitan area |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|------|-------------------|----------------------|
| | | | Northeast | North Central | South | West | | |
| Percent distribution | | | | | | | | |
| Total----- | 644,893 | 100.0 | 23.8 | 26.6 | 31.5 | 18.1 | 74.7 | 25.3 |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| Under 15 years----- | 125,077 | 100.0 | 23.9 | 27.3 | 34.3 | 14.6 | 70.7 | 29.3 |
| 15-24 years----- | 99,581 | 100.0 | 23.9 | 26.9 | 31.4 | 17.9 | 74.1 | 25.9 |
| 25-44 years----- | 159,551 | 100.0 | 24.3 | 25.6 | 31.2 | 18.9 | 79.9 | 20.1 |
| 45-64 years----- | 160,435 | 100.0 | 24.4 | 26.1 | 30.5 | 19.1 | 76.1 | 23.9 |
| 65 years and over----- | 100,249 | 100.0 | 22.0 | 27.7 | 30.5 | 19.8 | 70.0 | 30.0 |
| Sex | | | | | | | | |
| Male----- | 253,285 | 100.0 | 23.9 | 26.2 | 32.3 | 17.7 | 73.1 | 26.9 |
| Female----- | 391,608 | 100.0 | 23.8 | 26.8 | 31.0 | 18.4 | 75.8 | 24.2 |
| Color | | | | | | | | |
| White----- | 575,881 | 100.0 | 24.8 | 27.5 | 30.3 | 17.5 | 74.3 | 25.7 |
| All other----- | 69,013 | 100.0 | 16.1 | 18.4 | 42.2 | 23.3 | 78.2 | 21.8 |
| Rate per person per year | | | | | | | | |
| All patients----- | 644,893 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 2.5 |

MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table 3. Number and percent distribution of office visits to office-based physicians by sex, color, and age of patient, according to principal diagnosis: United States, May 1973-April 1974

[Diagnostic groupings and code number inclusions are based on the Eighth Revision, International Classification of Diseases, Adapted for Use in the United States, 1965]

| Principal diagnosis classified by ICDA group | Number of visits in thousands | Total | Sex | | Color | | Age | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|------|--------|-------|-----------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|
| | | | Male | Female | White | All other | Under 15 years | 15-24 years | 25-44 years | 45-64 years | 65 years and over |
| All diagnoses----- | 644,893 | 100.0 | 39.3 | 60.7 | 89.3 | 10.7 | 19.3 | 15.4 | 24.7 | 24.9 | 15.5 |
| I. Infective and parasitic diseases-----000-136 | 25,233 | 100.0 | 43.6 | 56.4 | 88.6 | 11.4 | 34.5 | 20.9 | 22.3 | 15.6 | 6.7 |
| II. Neoplasms-----140-239 | 12,713 | 100.0 | 36.2 | 63.8 | 90.5 | 9.5 | * | * | 18.2 | 39.0 | 31.4 |
| III. Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases-----240-279 | 26,099 | 100.0 | 26.8 | 73.2 | 87.1 | 12.9 | * | 9.4 | 30.5 | 37.7 | 18.9 |
| V. Mental disorders-----290-315 | 29,064 | 100.0 | 35.8 | 64.2 | 91.5 | 8.5 | 5.2 | 12.4 | 45.0 | 29.7 | 7.7 |
| VI. Diseases of nervous system and sense organs-----320-389 | 50,841 | 100.0 | 44.3 | 55.7 | 92.9 | 7.1 | 27.6 | 9.7 | 15.9 | 26.4 | 20.4 |
| VII. Diseases of circulatory system-----390-458 | 59,240 | 100.0 | 42.1 | 57.9 | 88.5 | 11.5 | 0.8 | 1.8 | 11.0 | 41.6 | 44.7 |
| VIII. Diseases of respiratory system-----460-519 | 97,383 | 100.0 | 45.8 | 54.2 | 88.7 | 11.3 | 36.9 | 14.0 | 20.3 | 19.9 | 9.0 |
| IX. Diseases of digestive system-----520-577 | 23,826 | 100.0 | 46.5 | 53.5 | 88.7 | 11.3 | 7.7 | 9.9 | 26.4 | 34.9 | 21.2 |
| X. Diseases of genitourinary system-----580-629 | 37,744 | 100.0 | 18.0 | 82.0 | 88.6 | 11.4 | 3.5 | 17.9 | 37.4 | 28.8 | 12.5 |
| XII. Diseases of skin and subcutaneous tissue-----680-709 | 34,099 | 100.0 | 43.3 | 56.7 | 89.7 | 10.3 | 23.4 | 27.3 | 21.9 | 17.0 | 10.3 |
| XIII. Diseases of musculoskeletal system-----710-738 | 34,370 | 100.0 | 36.8 | 63.2 | 89.2 | 10.8 | 5.9 | 8.1 | 19.0 | 39.7 | 27.2 |
| XVI. Symptoms and ill-defined conditions-----780-796 | 34,251 | 100.0 | 36.9 | 63.1 | 90.4 | 9.6 | 20.2 | 17.3 | 31.9 | 21.0 | 9.6 |
| XVIII. Accidents, poisoning, and violence-----800-999 | 47,609 | 100.0 | 57.4 | 42.6 | 87.6 | 12.4 | 19.6 | 21.3 | 26.9 | 22.7 | 9.4 |
| Special conditions and examinations without sickness-----Y00-Y13 | 110,203 | 100.0 | 31.9 | 68.1 | 88.9 | 11.1 | 25.1 | 24.0 | 29.8 | 13.4 | 7.7 |
| Other diagnoses ¹ ----- | 8,630 | 100.0 | 34.1 | 65.9 | 91.7 | * | 25.4 | 14.9 | 22.5 | 19.5 | 17.6 |
| No diagnosis given----- | 8,019 | 100.0 | 36.7 | 63.3 | 92.5 | * | 28.5 | 24.7 | 23.7 | 15.2 | * |
| Diagnosis unknown ² ----- | 5,569 | 100.0 | 35.1 | 64.9 | 87.6 | * | 23.3 | * | 25.1 | 23.8 | * |

¹IV. Diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs, 280-289; XI. Complications of pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium; XIV. Congenital anomalies; XV. Certain causes of perinatal morbidity and mortality.

²Includes blank, noncodeable, and illegible diagnoses.

Table 4. Number, percent, and cumulative percent of office visits to office-based physicians by the 15 most frequent principal diagnosis classified by ICDA category: United States, May 1973-April 1974

[Diagnostic groupings and code number inclusions are based on the Eighth Revision, International Classification of Diseases, Adapted for Use in the United States, 1965]

| Rank | Principal diagnosis classified by ICDA category | Number of visits in thousands | Percent of visits | Cumulative percent |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Medical or special examinations-----Y00 | 39,613 | 6.1 | 6.1 |
| 2 | Medical and surgical aftercare-----Y10 | 32,345 | 5.0 | 11.2 |
| 3 | Prenatal care-----Y06 | 25,359 | 3.9 | 15.1 |
| 4 | Essential benign hypertension-----401 | 22,752 | 3.5 | 18.6 |
| 5 | Acute respiratory infection-----465 | 21,514 | 3.3 | 22.0 |
| 6 | Neuroses-----300 | 16,570 | 2.6 | 24.5 |
| 7 | Observation, without need for further medical care-----793 | 15,893 | 2.5 | 27.0 |
| 8 | Chronic ischemic heart disease-----412 | 15,487 | 2.4 | 29.4 |
| 9 | Hay fever-----507 | 12,166 | 1.9 | 31.3 |
| 10 | Otitis media-----381 | 10,523 | 1.6 | 32.9 |
| 11 | Acute pharyngitis-----462 | 10,415 | 1.6 | 34.5 |
| 12 | Obesity-----277 | 10,136 | 1.6 | 36.1 |
| 13 | Refractive errors-----370 | 9,175 | 1.4 | 37.5 |
| 14 | Other eczema and dermatitis-----692 | 9,152 | 1.4 | 38.9 |
| 15 | Diabetes-----250 | 8,904 | 1.4 | 40.3 |
| | All other diagnoses----- | 384,889 | 59.7 | 100.0 |

MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table 5. Number and percent of office visits to office-based physicians by treatments and services ordered or provided, physician's specialty, and type of practice: United States, May 1973-April 1974

| Physician specialty and type of practice | Number of visits in thousands | Treatments and services ordered or provided | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| | | None | General history or exam | Lab procedure or test | X-rays | Injection or immunization | Office surgical treatment | Drug therapy ¹ | Psychotherapy or therapeutic listening | Medical counseling or advice | Other |
| Percent ² | | | | | | | | | | | |
| All specialties----- | 644,893 | 5.3 | 35.9 | 19.6 | 7.1 | 18.6 | 8.9 | 49.4 | 4.3 | 19.7 | 8.8 |
| General and family practice-- | 260,310 | 4.7 | 36.3 | 17.4 | 5.3 | 24.8 | 8.2 | 58.8 | 1.8 | 13.7 | 5.9 |
| Medical specialties----- | 169,316 | 3.7 | 41.1 | 25.7 | 9.7 | 23.9 | 5.4 | 52.0 | 2.9 | 24.6 | 4.8 |
| Internal medicine----- | 74,693 | 2.7 | 43.7 | 35.1 | 15.4 | 14.6 | 2.5 | 57.8 | 5.3 | 26.7 | 4.5 |
| Pediatrics----- | 53,659 | 5.2 | 49.8 | 19.5 | 3.0 | 29.7 | 3.6 | 45.2 | 0.7 | 26.4 | 1.0 |
| Other----- | 40,964 | 3.6 | 25.1 | 16.8 | 8.1 | 33.4 | 13.0 | 50.2 | 1.4 | 18.6 | 10.3 |
| Surgical specialties----- | 183,787 | 8.0 | 33.0 | 19.2 | 8.2 | 6.1 | 13.9 | 34.6 | 1.5 | 24.0 | 16.9 |
| General surgery----- | 44,846 | 7.4 | 28.7 | 13.0 | 7.8 | 10.6 | 23.3 | 29.7 | 1.2 | 16.3 | 11.8 |
| Obstetrics and gynecology----- | 50,715 | 8.2 | 43.6 | 41.5 | 1.7 | 4.0 | 4.2 | 41.4 | 2.1 | 23.6 | 11.1 |
| Other----- | 88,227 | 8.3 | 29.0 | 9.5 | 12.2 | 5.1 | 14.6 | 33.2 | 1.3 | 28.1 | 22.9 |
| Other specialties----- | 31,481 | 3.2 | 22.7 | 7.9 | * | 11.6 | 5.3 | 44.1 | 48.6 | 17.4 | 6.8 |
| Psychiatry----- | 20,300 | * | 11.1 | * | * | 10.3 | * | 36.6 | 71.9 | 14.3 | 3.8 |
| Other----- | 11,180 | * | 43.8 | 16.0 | * | 14.0 | 10.8 | 57.6 | 6.3 | 22.9 | 12.1 |
| Type of practice | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Solo----- | 386,208 | 5.3 | 34.2 | 17.7 | 5.1 | 19.4 | 7.9 | 52.3 | 5.2 | 18.4 | 8.7 |
| Other ³ ----- | 258,685 | 5.4 | 38.6 | 22.5 | 10.1 | 17.4 | 10.4 | 45.1 | 2.9 | 21.6 | 9.0 |

¹Includes prescription and nonprescription drugs.

²The sum of percentages by treatments and services ordered or provided may be greater than 100.0 percent, since one office visit may require the provision of more than one treatment or service.

³Includes partnership and group practices.

Table 6. Number and percent of office visits to office-based physicians by disposition of visit, physician's specialty, and type of practice: United States, May 1973-April 1974

| Physician specialty and type of practice | Number of visits in thousands | Disposition of visit | | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | | No followup planned | Return at specified time | Return if needed | Other ¹ |
| Percent ² | | | | | |
| All specialties----- | 644,893 | 12.7 | 61.2 | 21.4 | 9.4 |
| General and family practice-- | 260,310 | 16.1 | 54.8 | 25.8 | 6.6 |
| Medical specialties----- | 169,316 | 10.8 | 63.4 | 20.7 | 12.1 |
| Internal medicine----- | 74,693 | 10.0 | 67.0 | 17.7 | 14.1 |
| Pediatrics----- | 53,659 | 13.9 | 48.1 | 32.5 | 12.4 |
| Other----- | 40,964 | 8.4 | 77.0 | 10.9 | 8.4 |
| Surgical specialties----- | 183,787 | 10.6 | 65.3 | 17.2 | 11.2 |
| General surgery----- | 44,846 | 11.2 | 61.9 | 17.1 | 13.9 |
| Obstetrics and gynecology----- | 50,715 | 4.6 | 76.1 | 14.4 | 9.8 |
| Other----- | 88,227 | 13.7 | 60.9 | 18.9 | 10.8 |
| Other specialties----- | 31,481 | 6.3 | 76.9 | 12.0 | 7.9 |
| Psychiatry----- | 20,300 | 4.9 | 84.3 | 7.1 | * |
| Other----- | 11,180 | * | 63.5 | 20.9 | 14.3 |
| Type of practice | | | | | |
| Solo----- | 386,208 | 13.1 | 60.5 | 22.0 | 9.0 |
| Other ³ ----- | 258,685 | 12.1 | 62.1 | 20.4 | 10.4 |

¹Includes: telephone followup planned, referred to other physician, returned to referring physician, admit to hospital, and all other dispositions.

²The sum of percentages by disposition of visit may be greater than 100.0 percent, since one office visit may have more than one disposition.

³Includes partnership and group practices.

MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table 7. Number, percent, and cumulative percent of office visits to office-based physicians by the twenty most common patient problems, complaints, or symptoms: United States, May 1973-April 1974

[Symptomatic groupings and code number inclusions are based on a symptom classification developed for use in the NAMCS].

| Rank | Twenty most common patient problems, complaints, or symptoms | Number of visits in thousands | Percent of visits | Cumulative percent |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Progress visits-----980,985 | 75,673 | 11.7 | 11.7 |
| 2 | Other problems, NEC-----990 | 37,126 | 5.8 | 17.5 |
| 3 | Physical exam-----900,901 | 26,117 | 4.0 | 21.5 |
| 4 | Pain, etc.-lower extremity-----400 | 25,944 | 4.0 | 25.6 |
| 5 | Pregnancy exam-----905 | 25,942 | 4.0 | 29.6 |
| 6 | Throat soreness-----520 | 20,726 | 3.2 | 32.8 |
| 7 | Pain, etc.-upper extremity-----405 | 18,956 | 2.9 | 35.7 |
| 8 | Pain, etc.-back region-----415 | 18,824 | 2.9 | 38.7 |
| 9 | Cough-----311 | 18,347 | 2.8 | 41.5 |
| 10 | Abdominal pain-----540 | 16,418 | 2.5 | 44.0 |
| 11 | Cold-----312 | 13,460 | 2.1 | 46.1 |
| 12 | Gynecological exam-----904 | 13,154 | 2.0 | 48.2 |
| 13 | Visit for medication-----910 | 13,103 | 2.0 | 50.2 |
| 14 | None-----997 | 13,043 | 2.0 | 52.2 |
| 15 | Headache-----056 | 12,314 | 1.9 | 54.1 |
| 16 | Fatigue-----004 | 11,768 | 1.8 | 56.0 |
| 17 | Pain in chest-----322 | 11,350 | 1.8 | 57.7 |
| 18 | Well baby exam-----906 | 10,699 | 1.7 | 59.4 |
| 19 | Fever-----002 | 9,822 | 1.5 | 60.9 |
| 20 | Allergic skin reaction-----112 | 9,458 | 1.5 | 62.4 |
| | All other symptoms----- | 242,650 | 37.6 | 100.0 |

TECHNICAL NOTES

SOURCE OF DATA. Through the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, data are collected on office visits to office-based physicians. A national sample of approximately 1,700 "office-based, patient care" physicians was selected from the American Medical Association and American Osteopathic Association master files and randomly distributed over the 52, 1-week periods from May 1973 through April 1974. These physicians were requested to complete Patient Records (figure 3) concerning office visits taking place within their practice during assigned weekly reporting periods. The physicians participating in the survey complete Patient Records for approximately 30 randomly selected office visits during the reporting period. While all of the Patient Record data items are not presented in this report, they will be presented in future publications. Additional information concerning physician practice characteristics, e.g., primary specialty, office location, etc., are

gathered from an induction interview and from the AMA and AOA master files, and this information will also be included in future data analysis.

RELEASE OF DATA. NAMCS results in the form of summary statistical tabulations of national and regional estimates for the number of office visits, percent distributions, and rates will be published as soon as possible after each annual cycle is complete. The first of these reports covering the period May 1973 to April 1974 will be available by the fall of 1975. More detailed tabulations and analyses will follow which present visit characteristics by major physician and patient subgroups, e.g., an analysis of visits to surgical specialists, or an analysis of ambulatory utilization by specific age, sex, or color groups. Because the NAMCS is a continuous survey, future analysis will also include the investigation of notable utilization trends in ambulatory care.

Figure 3. Patient Record

ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY—All information which would permit identification of an individual, a practice, or an establishment will be held confidential, will be used only by persons engaged in and for the purposes of the survey and will not be disclosed or released to other persons or used for any other purpose.

A 121207

PATIENT RECORD
NATIONAL AMBULATORY MEDICAL CARE SURVEY

1. DATE OF VISIT
Mo / Day / Yr

2. DATE OF BIRTH
Mo / Day / Yr

3. SEX
1 FEMALE
2 MALE

4. COLOR OR RACE
1 WHITE
2 NEGRO/BLACK
3 OTHER
4 UNKNOWN

5. PATIENT'S PRINCIPAL PROBLEM(S) COMPLAINT(S), OR SYMPTOM(S) THIS VISIT
(In patient's own words)
3. MOST IMPORTANT _____
b. OTHER _____

6. SERIOUSNESS OF PROBLEM IN ITEM 5a
(Check one)
1 VERY SERIOUS
2 SERIOUS
3 SLIGHTLY SERIOUS
4 NOT SERIOUS

7. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THIS PATIENT BEFORE?
1 YES 2 NO
If YES, for the problem indicated in ITEM 5a?
1 YES 2 NO

8. MAJOR REASON(S) FOR THIS VISIT (Check all major reasons)
01 ACUTE PROBLEM
02 ACUTE PROBLEM, FOLLOW-UP
03 CHRONIC PROBLEM, ROUTINE
04 CHRONIC PROBLEM, FLARE-UP
05 PRENATAL CARE
06 POSTNATAL CARE
07 POSTOPERATIVE CARE
08 WELL ADULT/CHILD EXAM
09 FAMILY PLANNING
10 COUNSELING/ADVICE
11 IMMUNIZATION
12 REFERRED BY OTHER PHYS/AGENCY
13 ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSE
14 OTHER (Specify) _____
(Operative procedure) _____

9. PHYSICIAN'S PRINCIPAL DIAGNOSIS THIS VISIT
a. DIAGNOSIS ASSOCIATED WITH ITEM 5a ENTRY

b. OTHER SIGNIFICANT CURRENT DIAGNOSES (In order of importance)

10. TREATMENT/SERVICE ORDERED OR PROVIDED THIS VISIT (Check all that apply)
01 NONE ORDERED/PROVIDED
02 GENERAL HISTORY/EXAM
03 LAB PROCEDURE/TEST
04 X-RAYS
05 INJECTION/IMMUNIZATION
06 OFFICE SURGICAL TREATMENT (Specify) _____
07 PRESCRIPTION DRUG
08 NON-PRESCRIPTION DRUG
09 PSYCHOTHERAPY/THERAPEUTIC LISTENING
10 MEDICAL COUNSELING/ADVICE
11 OTHER (Specify) _____

11. DISPOSITION THIS VISIT (Check all that apply)
1 NO FOLLOW-UP PLANNED
2 RETURN AT SPECIFIED TIME
3 RETURN IF NEEDED, P.R.N.
4 TELEPHONE FOLLOW-UP PLANNED
5 REFERRED TO OTHER PHYSICIAN/AGENCY
6 RETURNED TO REFERRING PHYSICIAN
7 ADMIT TO HOSPITAL
8 OTHER (Specify) _____

12. DURATION OF THIS VISIT (Time actually spent with physician)
_____ MINUTES

HSM-658-2
REV. 4-73

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
HEALTH SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS

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SAMPLING ERRORS. Since the estimates for this report are based on a sample rather than the entire universe, they are subject to sampling variability. The standard error is primarily a measure of sampling variability, that is, the variations that might occur by chance because only a sample of the universe is surveyed. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that the value obtained in a complete enumeration is contained within the interval represented by the estimate plus or minus one standard error of the estimate, 95 out of 100 for two standard errors, and 99 out of 100 for 2½ standard errors.

The relative standard error of an estimate is obtained by dividing the standard error of the estimate by the estimate itself, and is expressed as a percent of the estimate. Relative standard errors of aggregates shown in this report are presented in table I. The standard errors appropriate for the estimated percentage of office visits are shown in table II.

ROUNDING. Aggregate estimates of office visits presented in the tables are rounded to the nearest thousand. The rates and percents, however, were calculated on the basis of original, unrounded figures. Due to rounding of percents, the sum of percentages may not equal 100.0 percent.

DEFINITIONS. An *ambulatory patient* is an individual presenting himself for personal health services, and being neither bed-ridden nor currently admitted to any health care institution on the premises.

Table I. Approximate relative standard errors of estimated number of office visits

| Estimate in thousands | Relative standard error in percentage points |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 2,000----- | 23.4 |
| 5,000----- | 15.1 |
| 10,000----- | 11.0 |
| 50,000----- | 6.0 |
| 90,000----- | 5.1 |
| 200,000----- | 4.4 |
| 400,000----- | 4.1 |
| 650,000----- | 4.0 |

Example of use of table: An aggregate of 250,000,000 has a relative standard error of 4.3 percent or a standard error of 10,750,000 (4.3 percent of 250,000,000).

MONTHLY VITAL STATISTICS REPORT

Table II. Approximate standard errors of percentages for estimated number of office visits

| Base of percentage number of visits in thousands | Estimated percentage | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|------|
| | 1 or 99 | 5 or 95 | 10 or 90 | 20 or 80 | 30 or 70 | 50 |
| 1,000----- | 3.3 | 7.1 | 9.8 | 13.1 | 15.0 | 16.4 |
| 2,000----- | 2.3 | 5.0 | 6.9 | 9.3 | 10.6 | 11.6 |
| 5,000----- | 1.5 | 3.2 | 4.4 | 5.9 | 6.7 | 7.3 |
| 10,000----- | 1.0 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 4.1 | 4.7 | 5.2 |
| 30,000----- | 0.6 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 3.0 |
| 50,000----- | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 2.1 | 2.3 |
| 100,000----- | 0.3 | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| 300,000----- | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.9 |

Example of use of table: An estimate of 30 percent based on an estimate of 75,000,000 has a standard error of 1.8 percent. The relative standard error of 30 percent in percentage points is equal to 1.8 percent ÷ 30 percent, or 6.0 percent.

Offices are premises which the physician identifies as a location for his ambulatory practice. Responsibility over time for patient care and professional services rendered there resides with the individual physician, rather than an institution.

A *visit* is a direct personal exchange between an ambulatory patient and the physician or a staff member working under the physician's supervision for the purpose of seeking care and rendering health services.

A *physician* is a duly licensed Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathy (D.O.) currently in practice who spends time in caring for ambulatory patients at an office location with the following exceptions: physicians who specialize in anesthesiology, pathology, radiology, physicians in military service, physicians who treat only institutionalized patients, physicians employed full time by an institution, and physicians who spend no time seeing ambulatory patients.

To receive the Monthly Vital Statistics Report regularly, contact the National Center for Health Statistics by calling 301-443-NCHS.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Public Health Service
HEALTH RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, Md. 20852
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty Private Use, \$300

SYMBOLS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Data not available----- | ... |
| Category not applicable----- | ... |
| Quantity zero----- | - |
| Quantity more than 0 but less than 0.05---- | 0.0 |
| Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision----- | * |

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