

## Assessment for Physician Awareness of Physiatry.

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### Published In/Presented At

Krueger, A. Dubov, W. E. (2017, March). *Assessment for Physician Awareness of Physiatry*. Poster Presented at: 2017 SELECT Capstone Posters and Presentations Day. Kasych Family Pavilion, Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, PA.

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# Assessment for Physician Awareness of Physiatry

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## Background

- Historically, the field of Physiatry or Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) has been a medical field largely underrepresented and misunderstood among physicians and patients receiving medical care.
- Physician lack of understanding has been implicated historically through incorrect placement of referrals to Physiatry, underutilization of Physiatric services, and misconception for the kinds of diagnoses treated and procedures performed by physiatrists.
- In account of these preliminary findings, this study looks to identify the foremost contributing factors leading to the general lack of understanding for the role of Physiatry among physicians at Lehigh Valley Healthcare Network with an emphasis on improving the quality of patient care.

## Methods

- A 9 question survey was sent out to 1377 physicians over a one month time frame to include both inpatient and outpatient physicians across all medical specialties. Survey polling occurred on the 1st of the month of Dec, 2016 with follow up reminders sent on the 15th and 29th of December.
- Survey questions asked physicians to identify diagnoses treated, procedures performed by physiatrists, and whether or not they refer to Physiatry. Quality improvement efforts were executed by educating providers on the scope of Physiatry practice through the use of an informational tool piece included at the end of the survey.
- This was followed by a question asking if physicians would like more information regarding Physiatry. Demographics included asking physicians to identify their specialty of practice and to designate whether they treat inpatients, outpatients, or both.

## Results

- Of the 1377 physicians polled, first round surveys attained a response rate of 101, followed by 58 responses on Dec 15th, and 40 responses on Dec 29th.
- Respondents who completed the survey in its entirety were noted to be 157 out of a possible 201 survey contributors.
- Statistical referral rate to Physiatry showed a 53% increase in outpatient referrals and a 23% increase in inpatient referrals when comparing Dec 2015 to Dec 2016 (pre and post survey) (Figure 1).
- Family medicine represented approximately 20% of physician respondents and Internal Medicine, 14.6%. These groups were the largest of the medical specialties contributing to the survey.
- Remarkably, 24% of physicians admitted they would like more information regarding the field of Physiatry. 68% said educational materials regarding Physiatry would be beneficial for patients.

Figure 1. Total Physiatry Referrals

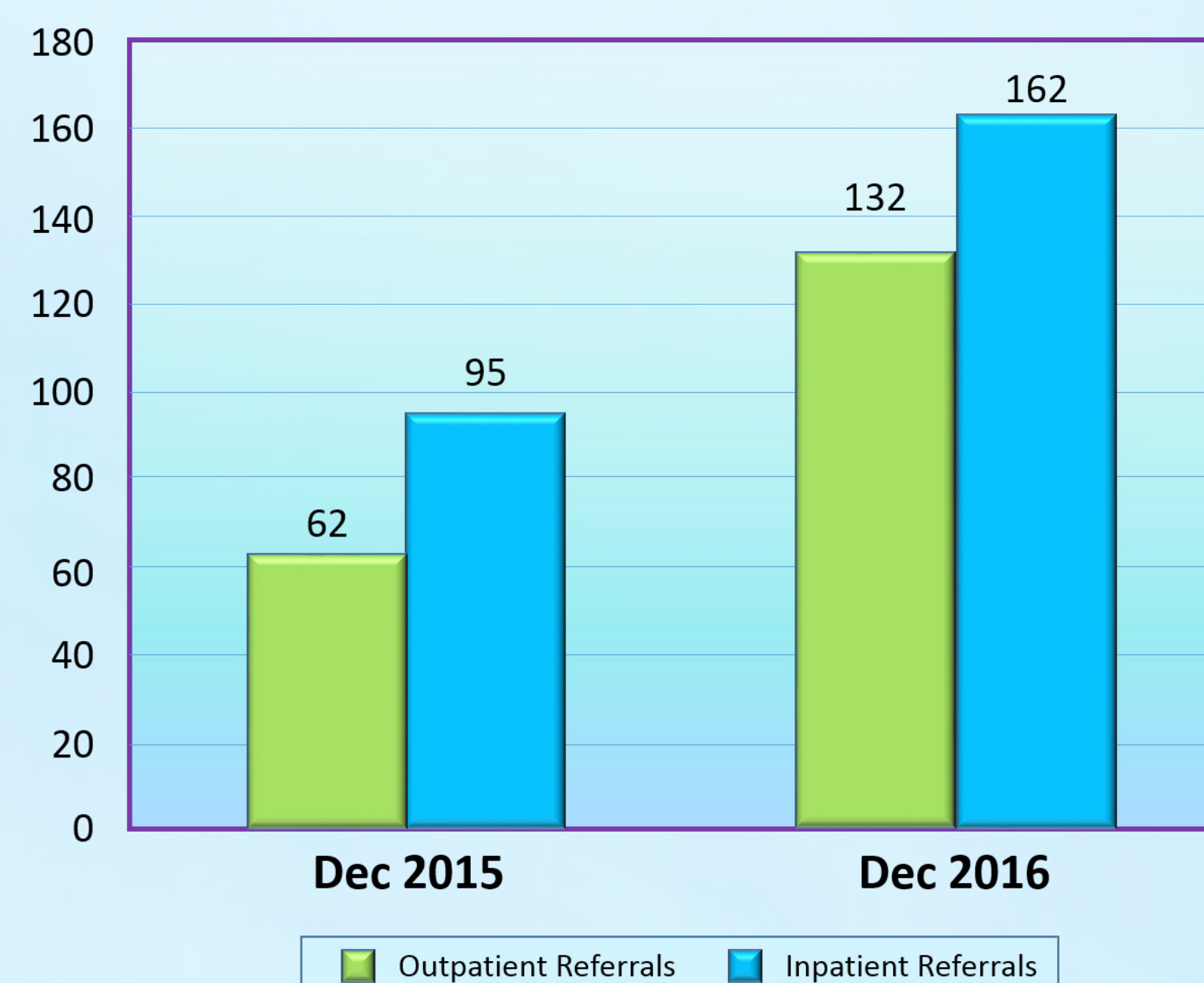
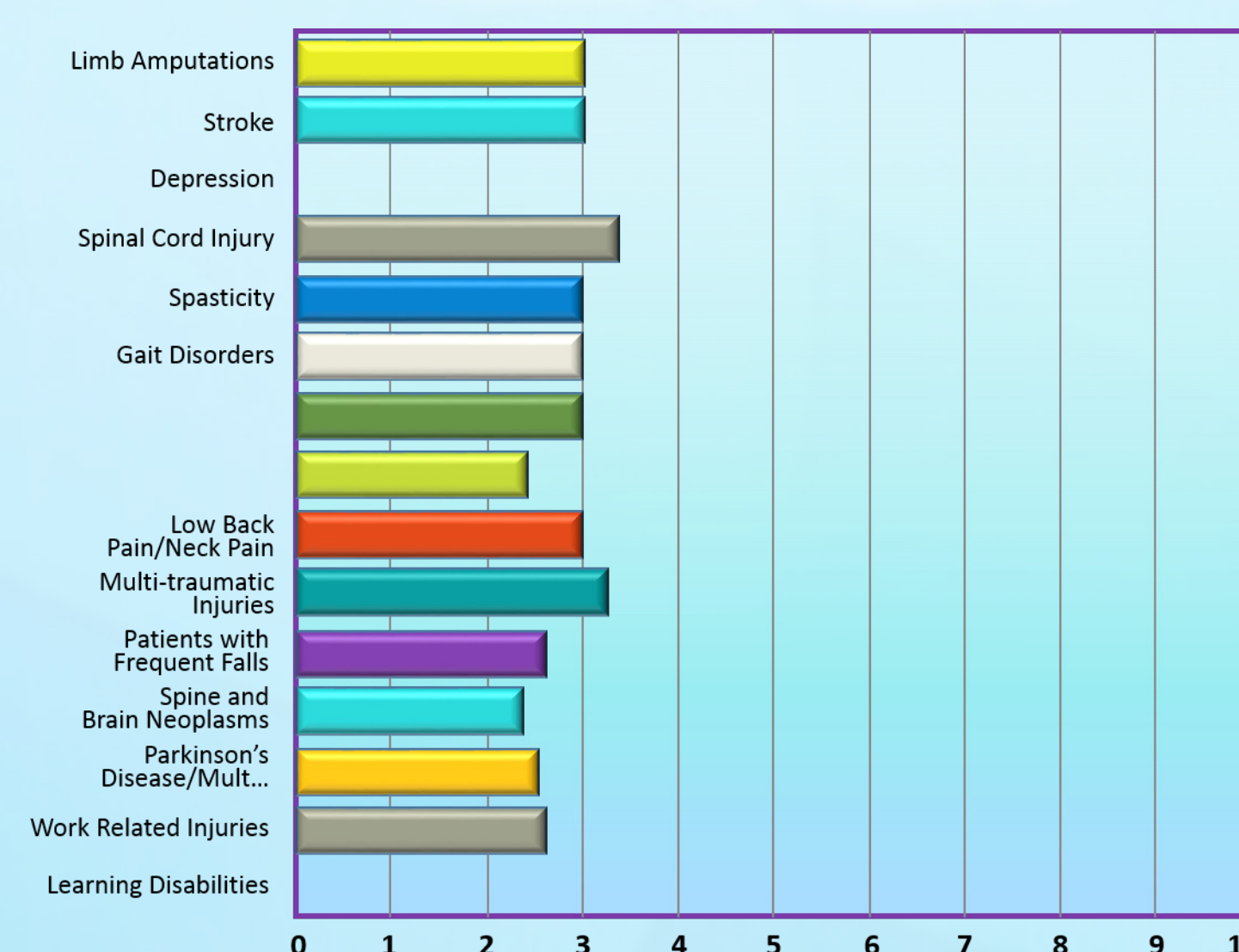


Figure 2. Survey Question

Q3 - What is the likelihood that you would refer one of your patients suffering from the following conditions to a Physiatrist?  
(Select a number: 1 = Never, 2 = Almost Never, 3 = Occasionally/Sometimes, 4 = Almost Always, 5 = Always)

Answered: 166 Skipped: 34



## Discussion

- In creating our survey we noticed that of the 65% physicians who admitted to being very familiar or better (4/5-5/5) with Physiatry, 100% were able to identify diagnoses and procedures performed by Physiatry with a likelihood of 60%. (Figure 2).
- Survey response rates were as expected, showing a gradual decline in response rate during each of the 3 administered dates of Dec 1st, 15th, and 29th.
- Identifying the largest two respondents groups of Internal Medicine and Family Medicine confirmed that these groups are perhaps more familiar with Physiatry, and are as a result, more likely to refer to PM&R.
- Most likely the increase in referrals between Dec 2015 and Dec 2016 to inpatient and outpatient PM&R is most likely multifactorial, with a potential increase resulting from the efforts of this study to raise awareness for Physiatry.

## Conclusions

- Preliminary results of the survey showed that a majority of physicians still remain largely uninformed about the role of Physiatry in patient care.
- With these preliminary results in place, we hope that our initial efforts will be used as a stepping stone in raising awareness for Physiatry and improving patient outcomes at LVHN.
- This quality improvement focus will continue by sending educational information to physicians who previously requested it in the survey.

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