

Journal Readership: Has Physician Behavior Changed?

**A Whitepaper Report
by**

DOCTORDIRECTORY

Asheville, NC, May 2007. DoctorDirectory.com, a marketing services company, recently conducted a survey regarding journal readership among a multi-specialty sample of physicians. Results were obtained from nearly 2000 (N=1992) physicians that included cardiologists, gastroenterologists, neurologists, and oncologists. The nature of the study was to determine how many journals physicians read, the amount time spent reading, and what journals hold the highest interest for them.

More or Less?

Nearly 50% of physicians need 3 weeks or more before they even pick up the recent issue of their favorite journal!

Approximately 81% of the respondents reported they average five hours or less reading medical journals of any type (figure 1), and 73% reported they routinely read only 2 to 5 different journals per month (figure 2). In 2000, a similar study was conducted among internists and reported in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* by Saint et al. Their respondents reported spending 4.4 hours per week reading medical

articles. This suggests that in light of greater time demands placed upon physicians, they continue to find time to maintain their professional education through journal readership. However, a 1989 study by Winkler et al reported an average of 6.2 hours per week spent reading journals. This decline that began in the late 80's early 90's may now have leveled off. In addition, nearly 50% of the respondents reported that journals remain unread for three weeks or longer following the receipt of the journal.

Figure 1. Average hours per week spent reviewing printed medical journals

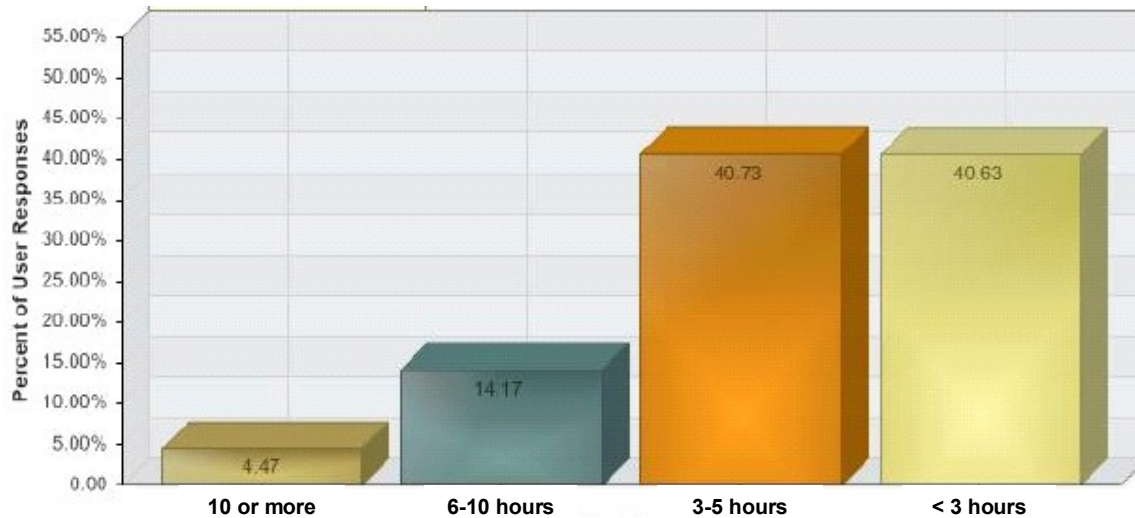
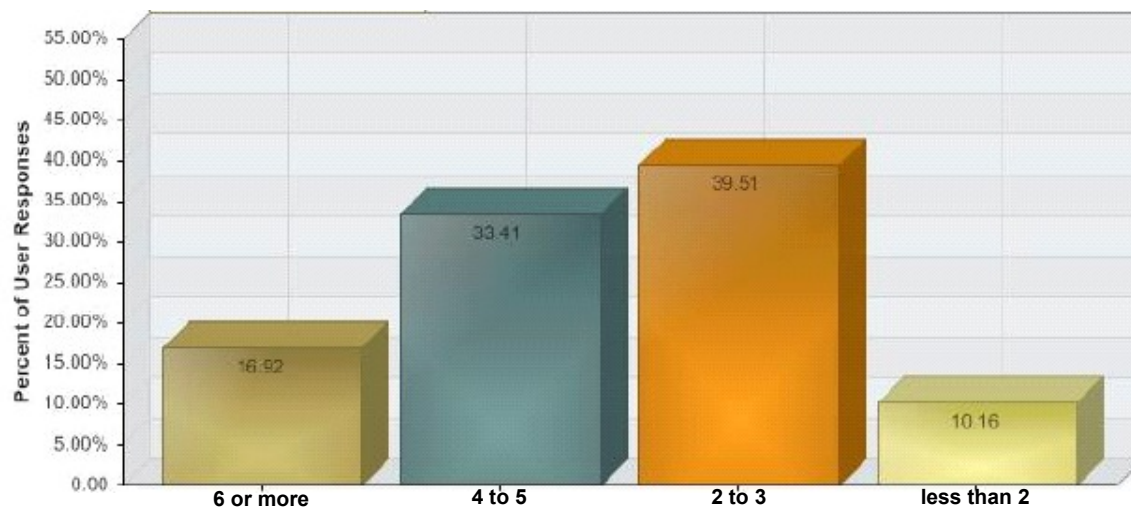


Figure 2. Estimated number of printed journals routinely read throughout a normal month.



What may be happening is that much of the physician's available time may now be spent reading online journals and/or other web-based news services. Forty one percent of the respondents indicated they spend three or more hours per week using web-based sources (online journals and news services) for medical information. As to which they read, Medscape and WebMD were the clear winners with nearly 56% indicating they read one of the two routinely.

Who's Hot – Who's Not

Not surprising was the type of journals that received the greatest readership time. Specialty-oriented and association journals received the most readership time followed by the multi-specialty clinical journals and AMA specialty journals. The medical tabloids and non-clinical journals received the least amount of readership time. When presented with a list of the top medical journals based on advertising revenue and asked to rank them as to which receives the least and most amount of readership time (1=highest and 10=lowest) the respondents indicated the following list:

<i>Journal</i>	<i>% Ranking as #1, 2 or 3</i>
New England Journal	77.8%
JAMA	73.3%
The Lancet	43.4%
Medical Economics	36.3%
American Medical News	21.7%
Consultant	18.8%
Physicians Practice	13.7%
British Medical Journal	11.6%
Physician's Money Digest	8.0%
Courtlandt Forum	4.2%

Like the amount of time spent reading, the selection of journals has not changed since 2000. In the study by Saint et al, the top three journals were the New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA, and the Annals of Internal Medicine.

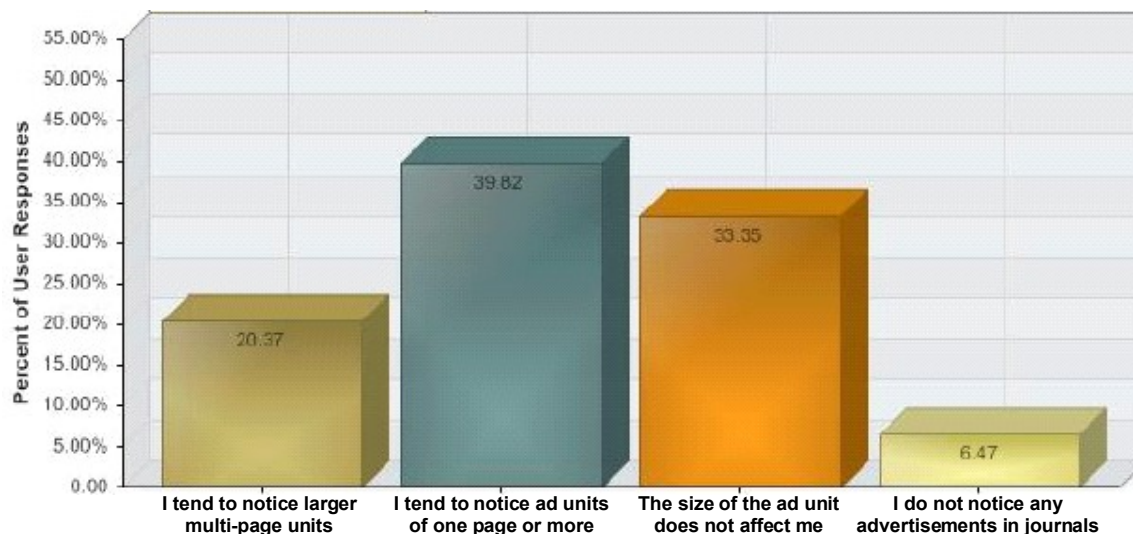
Size Matters

Do physicians really notice or read journal ads? Their mouth says no, but their actions say yes!

For years, pharma companies have been asking "do physicians notice advertisements within the journals" and "does the size of the ad impact its readership?" We posed this

question to our sample and asked if they agreed with the statement that physicians do not notice or spend very little time reviewing advertisements placed within medical journals. 82.5% responded that they definitely agreed or somewhat agreed with that statement. However, when next asked if the size of an ad unit has any impact on their ability to notice or read the ad (figure 3), more than 60% indicated that they tend to notice larger multi-page ad units and ad units of one page or more. Interestingly, only 6.5% said they do not notice any ads in journals. A contradiction? – Maybe not. We all know too well that what they say and what they do can be very different.

Figure 3. Size of an advertisement and impact on ability to notice or read



Keep on Keeping On!

The good news is that behaviors don't appear to be changing greatly so that journal advertising strategy need not change also. Print advertisers may have to compete more with online journals and news sources for available time, but this appears to have expanded the overall available time and not reduced it. And it still looks like the bigger multi-page inserts do capture attention and potentially have greater stopping power.

If you would like a copy of the complete research report, contact Tom St.Peter at tom.st.peter@DoctorDirectory.com or call 828-255-0012 extension 104.

DoctorDirectory.com is information-resources and marketing-solutions company for patients, physicians and industry clients who need access to high-quality information and virtual, innovative, interactive programs. We specialize in marketing programs that generate incremental revenue, guarantee a positive ROI and utilize a gain-share business model for measurable deliverable results.

Reference

Saint S, Christakis DA, Saha S, et al. Journal reading habits of Internists. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2000;15:881-884.