



# Assessment of Medicare Beneficiaries Perceptions of Annual Wellness Visits (AWVs)

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## Background

- **Annual Wellness Visit (AWV):** Medicare benefit to incentivize and promote evidenced-based preventive medicine<sup>1</sup>
- Slow uptake in utilization of this service
  - 20% national sample of Medicare beneficiaries: 7.5% utilization in 2011; 15.6% utilization in 2014<sup>2</sup>
  - 10% of physicians account for 42% of total AWVs<sup>3</sup>
- Limited studies on patients perceptions of this service and the impact on utilization rates<sup>4</sup>

## Objectives

To characterize Medicare beneficiaries' experiences, perceptions, values, and barriers or facilitators related to Annual Wellness Visits.

## Methods

### Study Design

- Qualitative study conducted between 1/2018-6/2018
  - 4 semi-structured focus group interviews
  - Questionnaires
  - Approved by the University of Maryland, Baltimore institutional review board

### Patient Population

- Age  $\geq$  65 years, English-speaking, active Medicare Part B status, established primary care provider
  - 3 geographically distinct locations in Maryland (urban, suburban, and rural)
  - Recruited from assisted-living facilities, senior housing apartments, primary care offices
- Key themes from the focus groups will be identified through the use of qualitative data analyses.

### Statistical Analysis

- Responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded for analysis using NVIVO software
- Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data.

## Focus Group Question Components

### Concepts and Related Questions Addressed in Focus Groups and Interviews

#### Concepts

1. General opinion and perceptions of preventive care
2. General awareness of annual wellness visits
3. Opinions towards Annual Wellness Visit Components
4. Perceptions of Missing Services
5. Barriers and Facilitators to Obtaining an Annual Wellness Visit
6. Perceptions of which health care professionals can complete an Annual Wellness Visit

#### Questions

- Describe your experience scheduling the visit?
- Describe your experience with the wellness visit?
- Would you be willing to see a non-physician for this service?
- Has your provider ever offered this type of visit to you?
- Have you heard this type of office visit before?

- How often do you receive this type of care?
- How important is preventive care to you?
- How difficult is it to receive this care?
- How likely would you be to complete a screening, test or receive a vaccine a healthcare professional has recommended to you?
- Why might you not want to receive a screening, laboratory test or vaccine?
- Raise your hand if you have heard of an "Annual Wellness Visit" or "yearly wellness visit" before? Where did you hear about it?
- If you have heard of it, have you completed a visit? Why or why not?
- Have you ever tried to schedule this type of visit with your primary care provider?
- After hearing about the annual wellness visit, how likely are you to schedule one, why?
- Where are some of the places you currently receive preventive healthcare?

## Results

Table 1. Demographics

Total Number of Participants	N=30
Age, y, mean (SD)	78.6 (8.4)
Location, n (%)	
Urban	15 (50%)
Suburban	6 (20%)
Rural	9 (30%)
Gender, n (%)	
Female	25 (83.3%)
Race, n (%)	
Caucasian	15 (50%)
African American	15 (50%)
Previously completed AWV, n (%)	9 (30%)
Number Chronic Conditions, mean (SD)	2.1 (1.4)
Chronic Medications, mean (SD)	6 (4.2)

Table 2. Perceptions of Preventive Care

	Not important	Slightly Important	Neutral	Important	Very Important	No Answer
<i>How important is receiving preventive care?</i>	0	0	0	2 (6.67%)	26 (86.7%)	2 (6.7%)
<i>How easy or difficult is it to receive this type of care?</i>	Very easy	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Very difficult	No Answer
	6 (20%)	8 (26.7%)	45(16.7%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	5 (16.7%)
<i>How likely would you be to complete a screening, test, or vaccine that a healthcare professional has recommended to you</i>	Not likely	Slightly Likely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely	No Answer
	0	2 (6.7%)	0	6 (20%)	17 (56.7%)	5 (16.7%)

Table 3. Example Quotations from Key Focus Group Concepts

Key Concepts	Suburban (Focus Group 1)	Rural (Focus Group 2)	Urban (Focus Groups 3 & 4)
<b>Opinions and perceptions of preventive care</b>	"Your history is essential because it's what your body has been dealing with."	"It's our health, and we must keep it as well as we can, as long as we can."  "I've heard negative things about getting shots, so there is that"	"It's very important."  "I will not be getting vaccines."
<b>Awareness of annual wellness visits</b>	"I have never heard [my physician] use that terminology before" "You mentioned that you had a wellness visit, is that how he described it?"	"Yes, [I heard of it] from a doctor."  "Well I have not heard it by that name"	"I have not heard of it."  "What is the difference between this and a physical?"
<b>Opinions towards annual wellness visit components</b>	"I think everything is pretty comprehensive"	"I might take it, I might not take it, I don't know. It all depends on what the doctor says"	"All of this is very important to me, very important to me and I have never been sick in my life until now. I've been well all my life."
<b>Barriers and facilitators towards obtaining an annual wellness visit</b>	"I have to schedule 6 months in advance, but he comes to my house"	"Transportation is very difficult, we are lucky because we have a bus to transfer us"	"It's difficult paying for all the things you have to go through."  "Travel and costs as far as I can think of"

## Limitations

- Limited to a single state
  - Recruited from geographically diverse communities
  - Patients primarily from assisted living apartments
  - Conducting this study in other states or healthcare settings may lead to different results
- To simplify discussions about annual wellness visits, advance care planning was not included in discussions
- Participation was voluntary. Individuals who participated may be more motivated to address their health needs and be less disabled and have different views of Medicare services.

## Conclusion

- Medicare beneficiaries are not commonly aware of AWVs. Beneficiaries who completed AWVs most commonly heard of the service from their personal physician.
- However, many beneficiaries value the preventive healthcare services in AWVs.
- Increased promotion of these services by healthcare professionals may increase the number of beneficiaries participating in these preventive visits.

## References

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