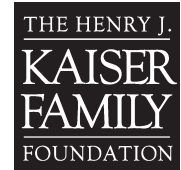


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Highlights and Chartpack



The Kaiser Family Foundation

# **National Survey of Physicians**

## ***Part II: Doctors and Prescription Drugs***

March 2002

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### **Methodology**

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation *National Survey of Physicians*, conducted by mail from March 26 through October 11, 2001, is based on a nationally representative random sample of 2,608 physicians whose major professional activity is direct patient care. The sample frame was developed from two sources, the American Medical Association's Physician Masterfile and a related file developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges that included additional information on the race and ethnicity of physicians. These two files are linked by a common identifier and were merged for the purposes of selecting this sample. African American, Latino, and Asian physicians were oversampled to increase the number of responses from these physicians. Results were then weighted by race and other factors to reflect the actual distribution of physicians in the nation. Foundation staff designed and analyzed the survey, and fieldwork was conducted by the Research Triangle Institute. The margin of sampling error is +/-3 percent, for results based on subsets of respondents the margin of error is higher. Note that in addition to sampling error there are other possible sources of measurement error, though every effort was undertaken to minimize these other known sources.

*The Kaiser Family Foundation is an independent, national health philanthropy dedicated to providing information and analysis on health issues to policymakers, the media, and the general public. The Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.*

## Doctors and Prescription Drugs

The majority of doctors believe that information they receive from prescription drug company representatives is helpful to them, viewing the information as at least somewhat useful and accurate. Almost all physicians have received perks from these representatives, with over 9 in 10 saying they have received free drug samples and a majority saying they have received meals, tickets to events, or free travel. The majority of physicians know that these drug company representatives receive information about their prescribing practices. When presented with three possible reactions to this profiling, physicians tend to express some discomfort but say they understand why the drug companies do this (43%). However, about 3 in 10 say they are strongly opposed to the collection and use of this information, while about 2 in 10 express the opposite view, saying they have no problem with this practice.

While the majority of doctors say that prescription drug advertisements at least “somewhat often” influence their patients to talk to them about specific diseases or treatments, doctors are even more likely to report that the general news media and friends and family members are frequent influences on their patients.

### **I. Interactions with Drug Representatives**

**Few doctors think information from drug company representatives is “very useful” or “very accurate,” but the majority believe it is at least “somewhat useful” and “somewhat accurate.” (Chart 1)** Fifteen percent of doctors say that information from drug representatives is “very useful,” and 59% say it is “somewhat useful.” One-quarter say it is “not very useful” or “not at all useful.” In terms of accuracy, 9% of doctors describe information from drug representatives as “very accurate,” 72% say it is “somewhat accurate.” One in seven say it is “not very” or “not at all accurate.”

**Most physicians (61%) say they have received meals, tickets to events, or free travel from a drug company representative. (Chart 2)** Almost all physicians (92%) have received free drug samples. Far fewer say they have received financial incentives to participate in drug trials (12%) or financial or other in-kind benefits (13%).

**Six in 10 physicians realize that drug industry representatives receive information about their prescribing practices, but around a third (34%) are not aware that this happens. (Chart 3)**

**When told that drug companies profile them, doctors are most likely to say they are not entirely comfortable with this, but they understand why the companies collect the information. (Chart 3)** Forty-three percent of doctors pick the statement, “It bothers me, but I understand why they do it,” about 3 in 10 (31%) express strong opposition to the practice, picking the statement, “It is unacceptable for them to collect and use this information,” and 22% of doctors do not mind this practice at all, picking the statement, “I have no problem with them collecting and using this information.”

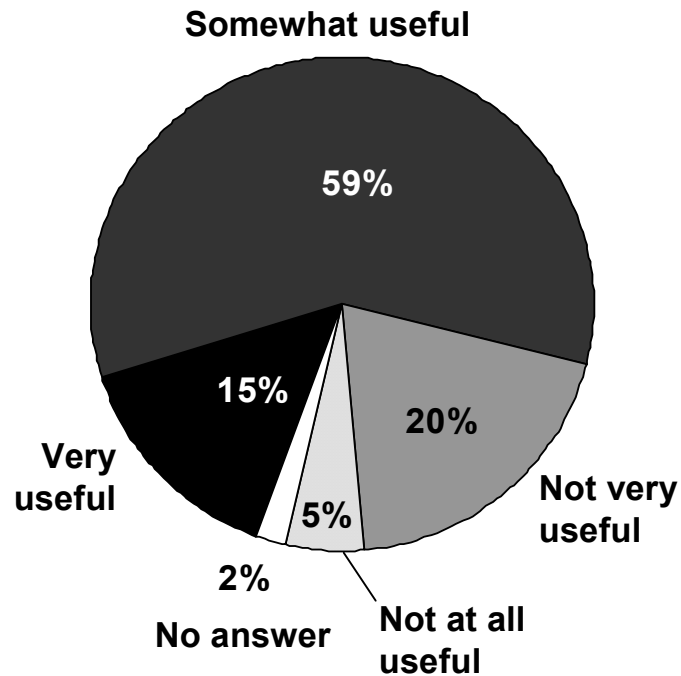
## **II. Prescription Drug Advertising and Other Influences on Patients**

**While the majority of doctors say prescription drug advertisements influence patients to talk to their physicians at least “somewhat often,” they say the general news media and friends and family members are more frequent influences. (Chart 4)** Around 6 in 10 doctors (63%) say that their patients at least “somewhat often” talk with them about specific diseases or treatments that they heard about from prescription drug advertisements (17% say this happens “very often” and 46% say this happens “somewhat often”). However, doctors are even more likely to say their patients at least “somewhat often” talk to them about diseases or treatments they heard about in the news media (80%) or from friends and family (80%). Sixty percent of doctors say that the Internet influences their patients at least “somewhat often,” and 20% say entertainment shows like *ER* at least “somewhat often” influence their patients to talk with them about diseases and treatments.

Chart 1

# Doctors' Views on Information from Drug Company Representatives

How useful is information from drug industry representatives about diseases or treatments?



In general, how accurate is the information that drug industry representatives provide about diseases and treatment options?

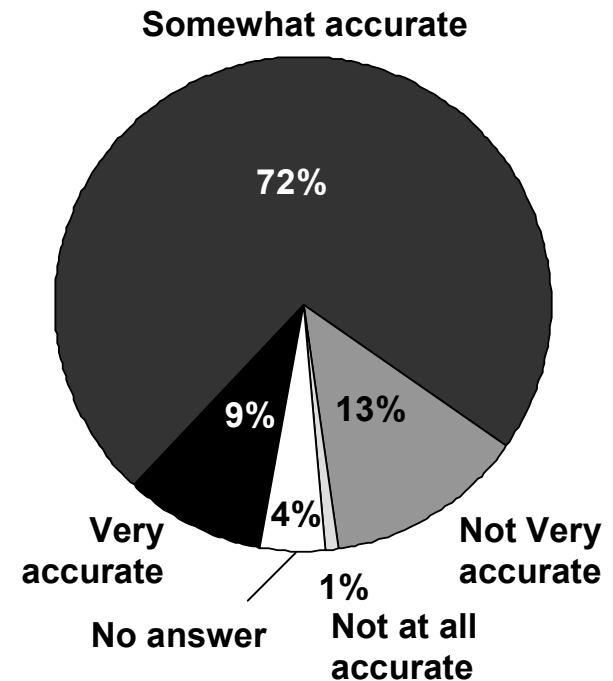


Chart 2

## Perks from Drug Company Representatives

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Have you ever accepted any of the following from a drug industry representative?

Percent saying "Yes"

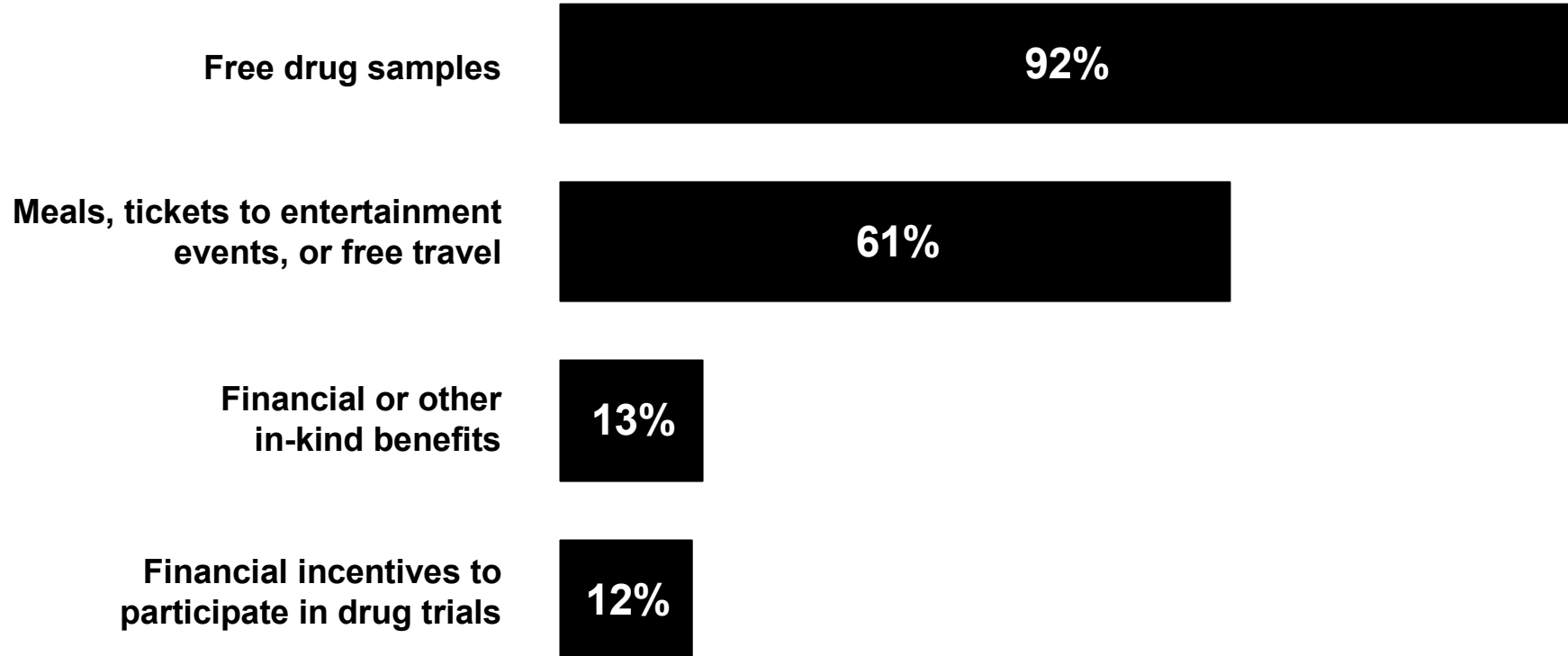
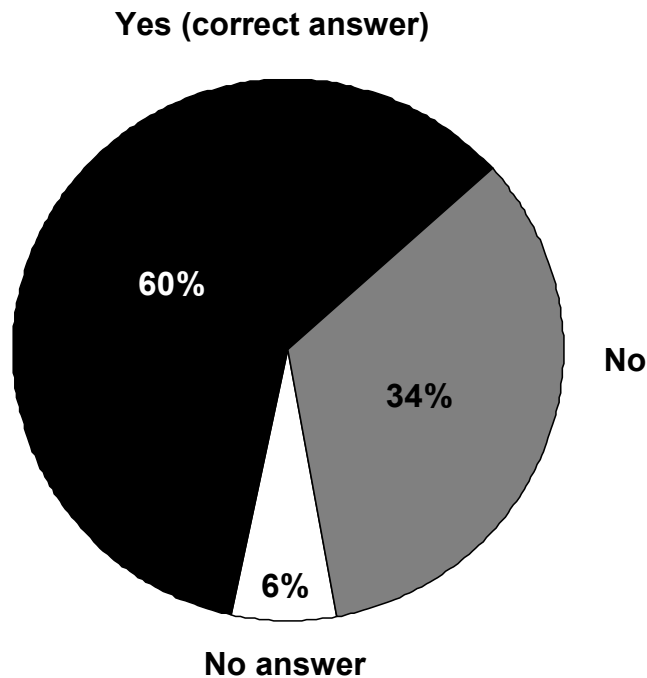


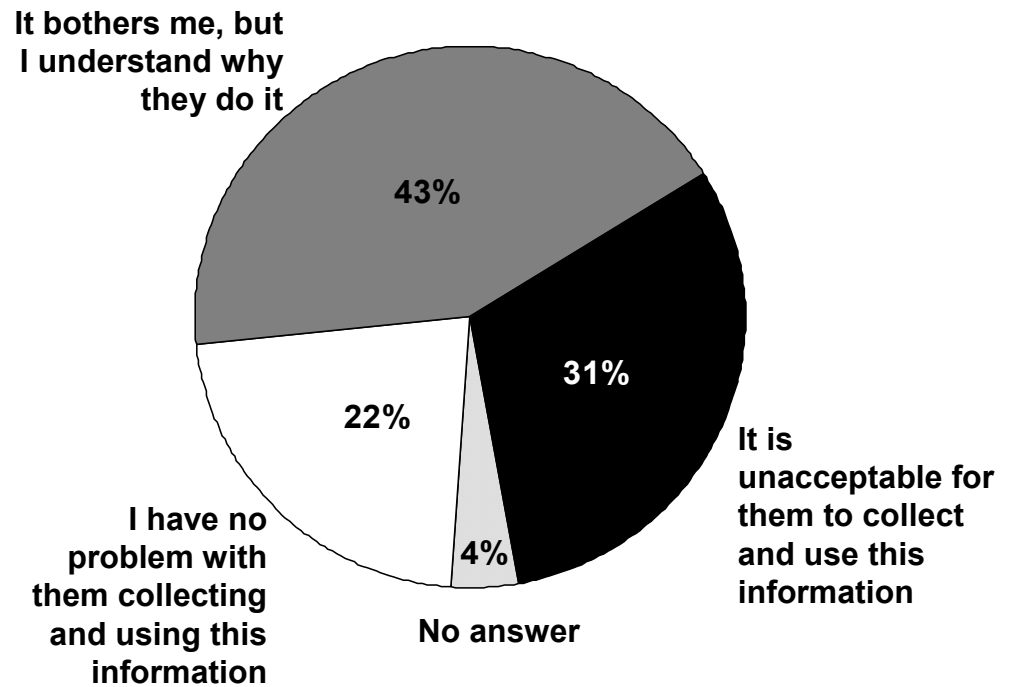
Chart 3

# Doctors' Knowledge of and Opinions about Drug Company Representatives Accessing Prescribing Practice Information

Do drug company representatives receive information about how often you prescribe certain drugs?



Suppose that drug company representatives do receive this information, which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion of this practice?

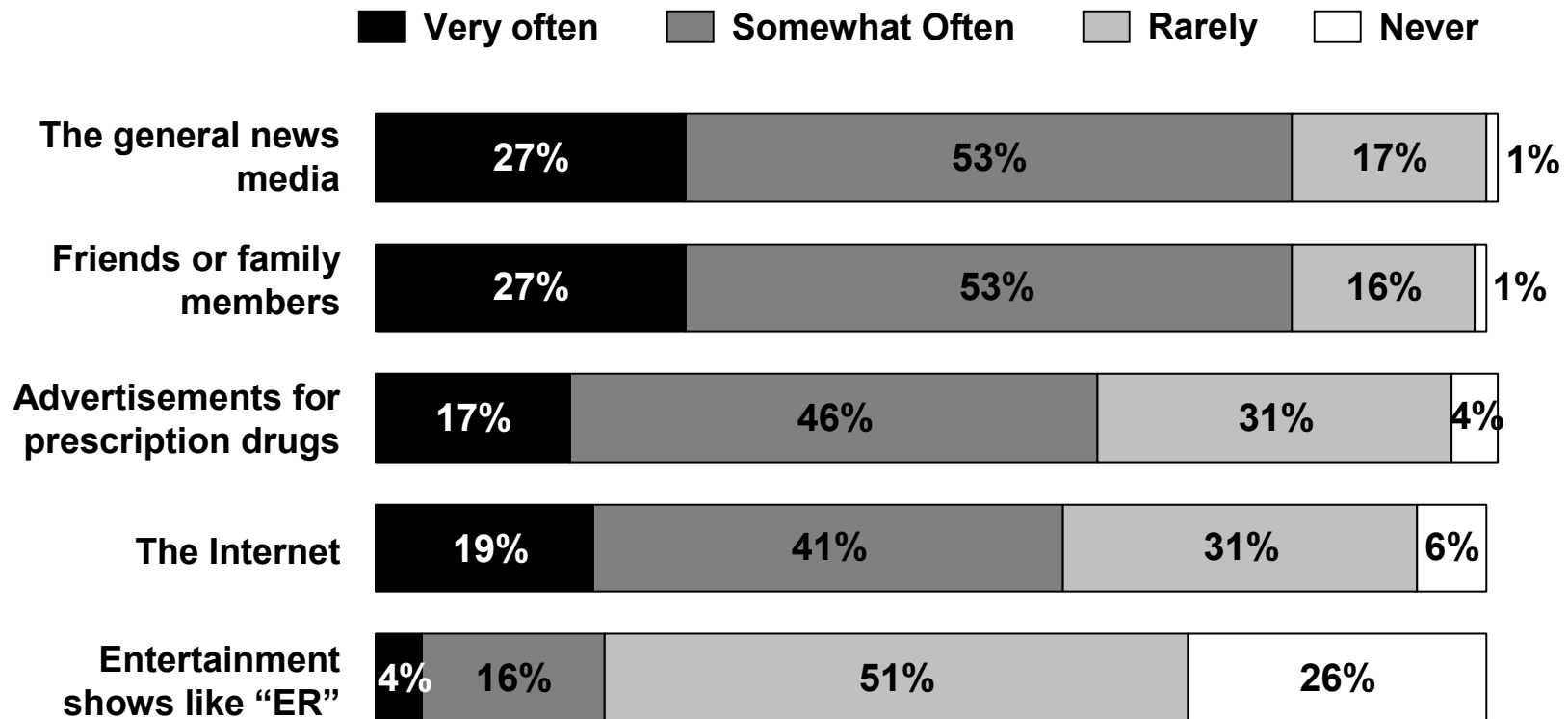


Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, *National Survey of Physicians*, March 2002 (conducted March-October 2001)

Chart 4

# Influences on Patients to Talk with their Physicians

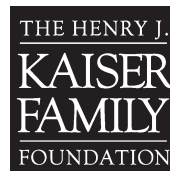
How often do your patients talk to you about specific diseases or treatments that they heard from...



Note: "No answer" not shown

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, *National Survey of Physicians*, March 2002 (conducted March-October 2001)





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