

Monthly



(HRA) 76-1120
VOL. 24, NO. 4
SUPPLEMENT (2)
JULY 14, 1975

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.

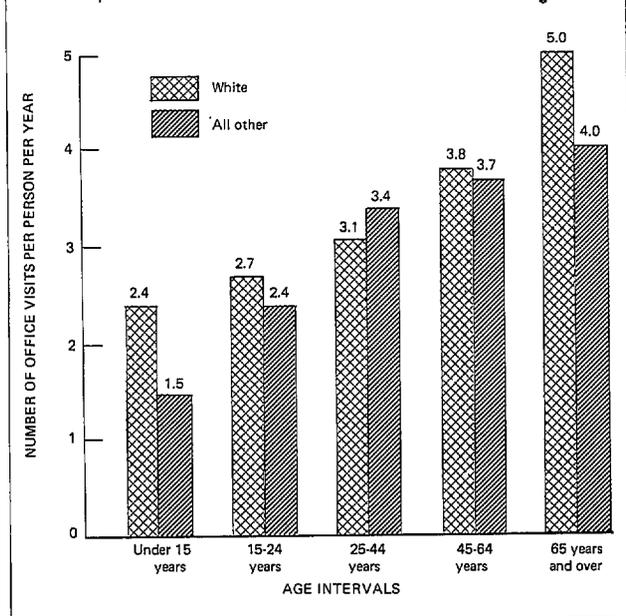
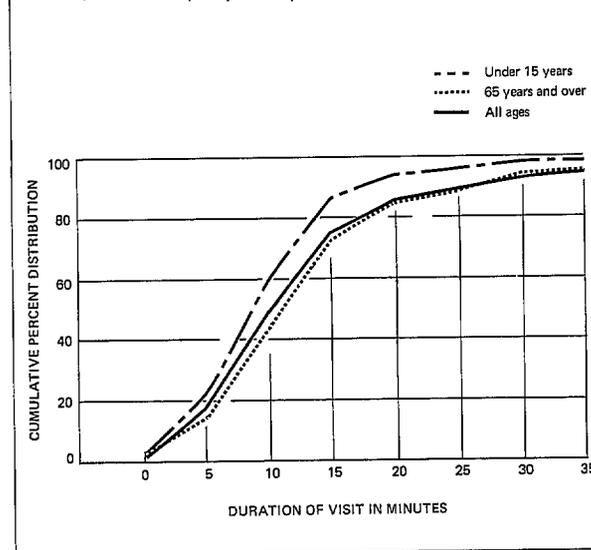


Figure 2. Cumulative percent distribution of office visits to office-based physicians by selected age groups and duration of visit: United States, May 1973-April 1974.



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.

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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

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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

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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.

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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 _____	4. COLOR OR RACE 1 <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE 2 <input type="checkbox"/> NEGRO/BLACK 3 <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER 4 <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN	5. PATIENT'S PRINCIPAL PROBLEM(S) COMPLAINT(S), OR SYMPTOM(S) THIS VISIT (In patient's own words) a. MOST IMPORTANT _____ b. OTHER _____
3. SEX 1 <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE 2 <input type="checkbox"/> MALE	6. SERIOUSNESS OF PROBLEM IN ITEM 5a (Check one) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> VERY SERIOUS 2 <input type="checkbox"/> SERIOUS 3 <input type="checkbox"/> SLIGHTLY SERIOUS 4 <input type="checkbox"/> NOT SERIOUS	
8. MAJOR REASON(S) FOR THIS VISIT (Check all major reasons) 01 <input type="checkbox"/> ACUTE PROBLEM 02 <input type="checkbox"/> ACUTE PROBLEM, FOLLOW-UP 03 <input type="checkbox"/> CHRONIC PROBLEM, ROUTINE 04 <input type="checkbox"/> CHRONIC PROBLEM, FLARE-UP 05 <input type="checkbox"/> PRENATAL CARE 06 <input type="checkbox"/> POSTNATAL CARE 07 <input type="checkbox"/> POSTOPERATIVE CARE _____ (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 <input type="checkbox"/> NONE ORDERED/PROVIDED 02 <input type="checkbox"/> GENERAL HISTORY/EXAM 03 <input type="checkbox"/> LAB PROCEDURE/TEST 04 <input type="checkbox"/> X-RAYS 05 <input type="checkbox"/> INJECTION/IMMUNIZATION 06 <input type="checkbox"/> OFFICE SURGICAL TREATMENT (Specify) _____		11. DISPOSITION THIS VISIT (Check all that apply) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> NO FOLLOW-UP PLANNED 2 <input type="checkbox"/> RETURN AT SPECIFIED TIME 3 <input type="checkbox"/> RETURN IF NEEDED, P.R.N. 4 <input type="checkbox"/> TELEPHONE FOLLOW-UP PLANNED 5 <input type="checkbox"/> REFERRED TO OTHER PHYSICIAN/AGENCY 6 <input type="checkbox"/> RETURNED TO REFERRING PHYSICIAN 7 <input type="checkbox"/> ADMIT TO HOSPITAL 8 <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify) _____
		12. DURATION OF THIS VISIT (Time actually spent with physician) _____ MINUTES

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
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EXPIRATION DATE 6/30/75

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).

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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.

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

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