

Introduction

Trust in physician should help reinforce the idea of the physician-patient relationship as a partnership. Since trust is the universally accepted basis for any human interaction (Gundlach & Murphy, 1993), a patient's trust in a physician is a precondition for successful medical care (Leisen & Hyman, 2004). Trust is also important because the relationships between patients and medical professionals concern life or death and physical wellbeing directly. In addition, the traits of the medical practice often involve uncertainty and irreversibility (Kim et al., 2018). Research shows a trusting physician-patient relationship leads to an increase in patient satisfaction, increase in the probability of treatment adherence, and an improvement in the patient's overall health status (Pearson & Raeke, 2000). In order to increase and maintain patients' trust in their physicians the factors which affect patient trust must be properly identified for applications in this field to move forward.

Methods

A 39 item 5-point Likert scaled survey was administered to 100 participants around the U.S. via Amazon's MTurk. The participants consisted of 56 males, 42 females, and 2 who identified as other. Of the participants, 7 were 18-24 years, 60 were 25-34 years, 27 were 35-44 years, and 4 were 45-54 years. Fifty-six participants had health insurance provided by an employer, 19 had private insurers, 19 had government provided health insurance, and 6 were uninsured. Data regarding how many times participants saw his/her primary care physician per year can be seen in Figure 1. The factors assessed in this survey include office environment and logistical factors, aspects of the medical interview, and perceived physician competence, both technical and interpersonal, and were parametrized via previous trust scales specific to the patient-physician setting. Six of the 39 items were negatively worded and, therefore, reverse scored. Data were analyzed via JMP® 13, contingency analyses were performed for each item against the demographic information and against the other items in the survey.



Results

On average, patients have a good amount of trust in primary care physicians. Average response across all responses on all questions was 2.98 (strongly disagree=0, strongly agree=4), indicating that patients generally have high trust in their physicians. However, certain items had large variance and over 35% negative responses, including "Sometimes my physician could do more for my medical care" and "I worry my physician will judge me on my lifestyle choices." A relationship between visits per year and lying about drug or alcohol use was found to be statistically significant ($p=.0065$).

Primary Care Physician Visits Per Year

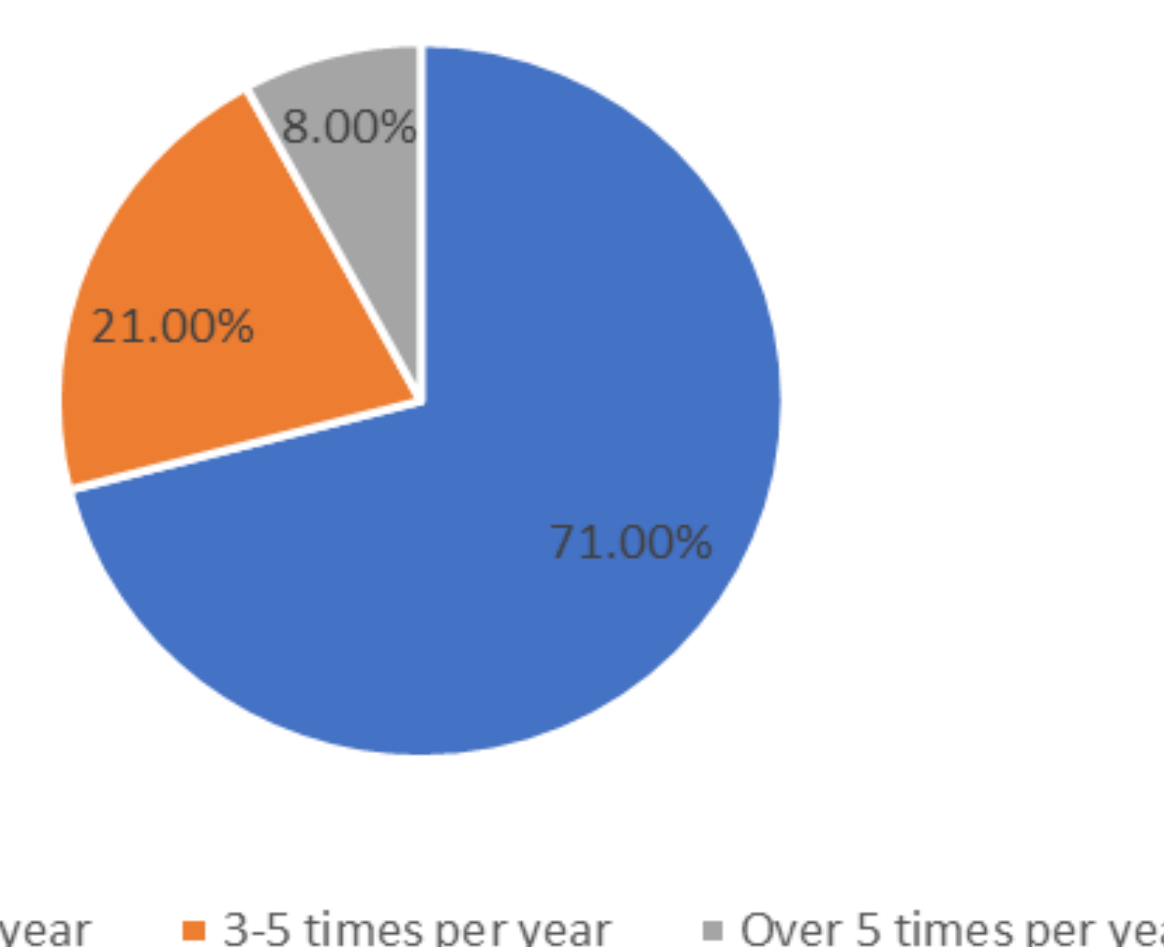


Figure 2. Distribution of how many times participants saw primary care physician per year.

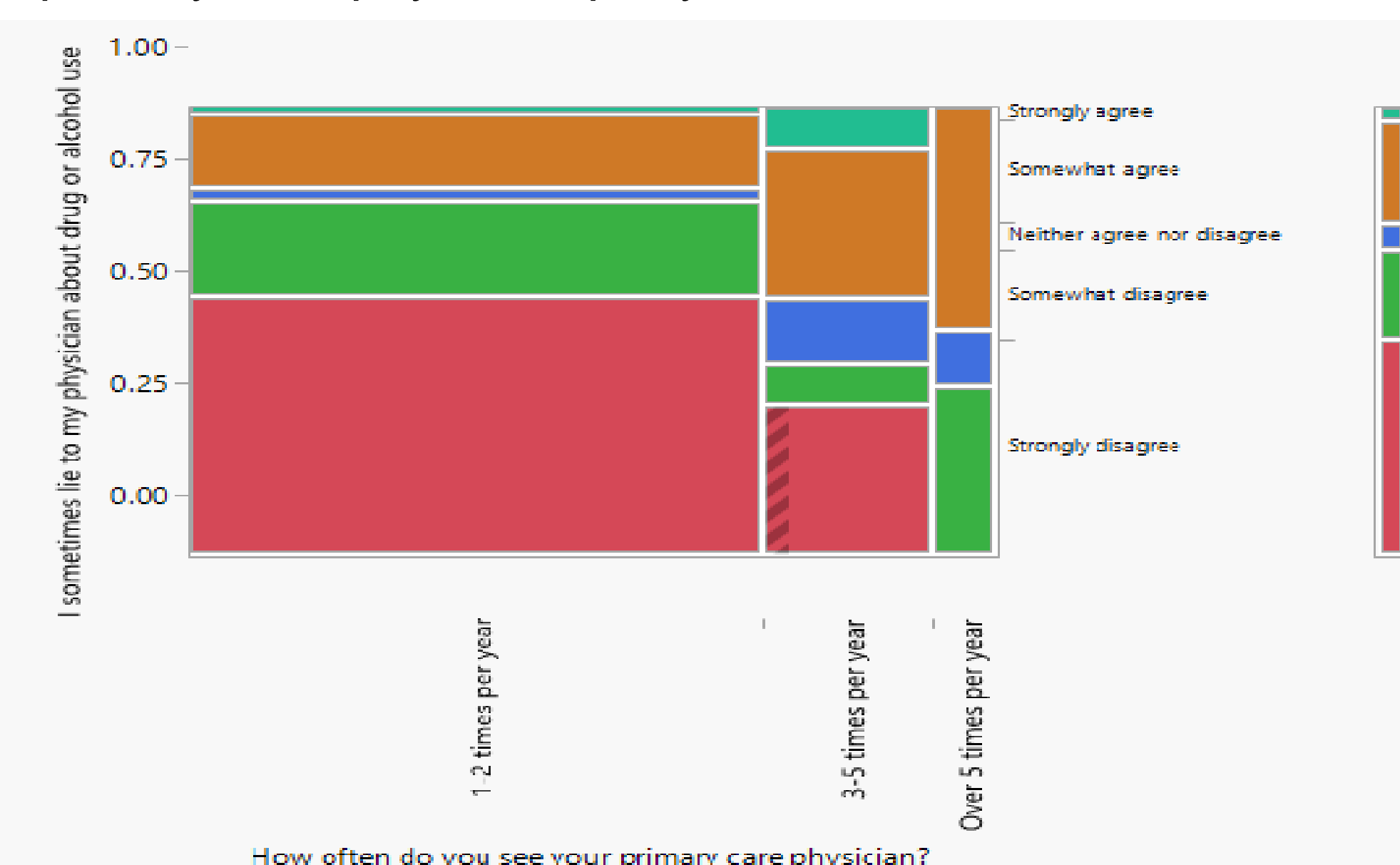


Figure 1. Participants response differed significantly based on how many times primary care physician is seen per year. Pearson chi square=21.251, $P=.0065$

Discussion

The large amount of negative responses on certain items indicates that there are still areas which can be improved. There was a negative correlation found between number of times primary care physician (PCP) is seen per year and response to "I sometimes lie to my physician about drug or alcohol use". As participants saw their primary care physicians more often they tended to answer this item more negatively (strongly agree or somewhat agree). Though recency of visit is positively correlated with trust, this negative correlation could be due to factors such as that patients who see their PCP more may have indicators of bad health such as low self rated health, which are strong predictors for low trust in physicians (Kim et al., 2018), causing them to visit their PCP more often. Future studies are needed to confirm these conclusions and further improve physician-patient relationships.

Bibliography

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