MediPass Primary Care Physician Network Analysis: Primary Findings

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Introduction

Assuring that there is adequate primary care capacity is critical to the success of Medicaid primary care case management programs, such as MediPass. Several earlier studies documented that physician participation in Medicaid varies considerably throughout the country, and there has been a decline in participation in recent years. In 2001, about 85 percent of all physicians throughout the country participated in Medicaid. However, for most physicians, their Medicaid practice tends to be small – contributing less than 10 percent to overall total practice revenues (Cunningham, 2002). Nationally, the number of physicians who will not accept new Medicaid patients increased from 26 percent to 31 percent between 1999 and 2001 (Schoenman, 2003). And, in Alabama and Georgia, the introduction of a primary care case management program similar to MediPass, actually resulted in lower physician participation in Medicaid (Adams, et al, 2003). Low reimbursement levels, burdensome paperwork, and persistently negative opinions about Medicaid are said to be some of the reasons for low physician participation in some communities (Berman et al, 2003; Perloff et al, 1995; Bindman et al, 2003).

In Florida, a 2002 evaluation concluded that Florida MediPass had excess primary care capacity. At the time, there were over 4,685 contracted providers or groups providing a capacity that was 10 times greater than the enrolled MediPass population. The report noted that in order to keep costs down, Medicaid may want to consider reducing the size of the MediPass network so as to exert control over providers and to assure greater efficiency within the program (Florida Center for Medicaid Issues, 2002).
This earlier study relied on data that did not consider whether physicians were accepting new Medicaid patients. Physicians may be contracted with MediPass, but limit their practice to a few existing patients. Thus, while it may appear that a community or region has adequate coverage, this may in fact not be the case if only a few physicians are taking additional patients. In addition, the MediPass program has instituted a requirement that for all program enrollees, a PCP must be located within 30 minutes drive time of their home. Therefore, simply looking at the number of physicians in an area without appropriate consideration of the drive time rule may lead to an overestimation of PCP capacity.

To address this issue, the Florida Center for Medicaid and the Uninsured contacted MediPass primary care physicians to learn if they are accepting new Medicaid patients. Mapping analysis then examined the extent to which there is sufficient MediPass primary care capacity throughout the state.

Methods

**Sample** Participating MediPass primary care physicians were identified from lists supplied by Medicaid area offices and from a list generated by QueryPath. The various lists were combined resulting in a master list of over 3,000 unique providers identified by their unique provider IDs.

**Survey** The main goal of the project was to collect information on whether physicians were accepting new MediPass patients and to understand some of the barriers MediPass patients may encounter in trying to make appointments with their PCPs. It was important to ensure that interviewers engaged in realistic dialogue with office staff, and that
interviewers could easily document findings from these conversations. Therefore interviewers used a basic script that asked: whether the provider was accepting new patients in general, whether they were accepting MediPass patients specifically, and if so, how long it would take to get an appointment. Physicians’ offices were generally not aware that they were being surveyed.

In a training session, interviewers role-played and tested the script with several initial calls. Modifications were made based on these pilot calls. During and after the call other information was also recorded, such as the length of time the interviewer spent on hold, and the number of times they were transferred. This information was gathered in order to capture the ‘hassle factor’ involved in trying to get an appointment. This information will be reported elsewhere. The data sheet used to collect this information is included in Appendix 1.

**Data Analysis.** Florida Medicaid requires a MediPass Providers to be within a 30-minute drive of every enrollee. This criterion was used to create MediPass provider service areas based on 30-minute drive times out in every direction from the provider’s address. Creating drive time service areas for every accepting MediPass provider in the state will allow for the identification of gaps in service.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is a standard tool for mapping and exploring variation in the demand and supply of health care services (McLafferty, 2003). In this analysis GIS was used to place a point on a map for every MediPass provider by geocoding based on the provider’s address or zip code. MediPass beneficiaries were also geocoded by zip code. Service area polygons were then created by a network analysis of the statewide
Findings

The series of maps and charts presented here summarize preliminary findings from the survey and mapping exercise. A total of 3,800 physicians were identified as either being on an area office list or were listed in QueryPath. Eighty-eight percent of all physicians surveyed said that they were accepting new patients. However, when probed, a smaller percentage of offices (74 percent) responded that they were actually taking new MediPass patients.

With a few exceptions, statewide coverage by MediPass physicians appears to be good. Using the 30-minute drive-time rule discussed earlier, most of the state’s MediPass population appears to have appropriate access to a primary care provider. Areas of concern include parts of south Florida including Monroe county, and communities in south central areas and in the Panhandle. Of particular concern is the lack of pediatric and obstetrics and gynecology physicians in certain areas.
The majority of MediPass providers are continuing to accept new MediPass patients. When asked, 88 percent of offices said they will see new patients. However, when asked specifically about Medicaid patients, 74 percent of providers will see a new MediPass patient. Acceptance of new MediPass patients varies across communities. In Broward only 65 percent of identified MediPass physicians will take a new patient, compared to 86 percent in Duval county.
Figure 2 – Percent Of MediPass Physicians On An Area Office List Who Are Accepting New Patients

Area offices supplied lists of providers who are accepting new MediPass patients. These are the same lists that are given to MediPass beneficiaries. Statewide, 77 percent of physicians on an area office list will see new MediPass patients. This ranges from a low of 58 and 59 percent in Areas 8 and 1 respectively, to a high of 97 percent in Area 4.
Figure 3 – Percent of MediPass Physicians on An Area Office List who are Accepting New Patients: Statewide, by Specialty

Ninety percent of the OB/GYN physicians surveyed will see new MediPass patients, compared to 65 percent of Internal Medicine physicians. Although there are high acceptance rates among OB/GYNs, coverage is inadequate because of the relatively small numbers of participating OB/GYN physicians (see Figures 16 and 17).
As expected, most of the MediPass physicians are located in the major metropolitan areas of Miami-Dade, Ft. Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Tampa, Orlando, and Jacksonville…….
Figure 5 – MediPass Enrollees by Zip Code Area

.....which is where most of the MediPass beneficiaries live.
The gray area represents areas within 30 minutes of a MediPass provider (also called service area). Most of Florida’s populated areas are within 30 minutes of a MediPass provider. A few small, wealthy communities are not within 30 minutes of a MediPass provider.
Most MediPass beneficiaries live within 30 minutes drive time of a primary care provider. However, some communities (identified by the blue squares) rely heavily on a few providers to deliver care to MediPass patients. MediPass patients could experience access barriers if these providers should withdraw from Medicaid.

However, Medicaid areas with large numbers of providers may wish to consider downsizing their networks in order to exert control over providers and to assure greater efficiency.
Figure 8 - Ratio of MediPass Enrollees to Accepting Providers within a 30-minute Drive Time: Pensacola and Surrounding Areas

Zip codes 32536 (Century), 32506 , 32505, 32501 (Pensacola) and 32547 (Ft. Walton Beach) have high enrollee to provider ratios.
Figure 9 - Ratio of MediPass Enrollees to Accepting Providers within a 30-minute Drive Time: Panama City and Surrounding Areas

Zip codes 32401, 32404, 32405 (Panama City) and 32348 (Perry) have high enrollee to provider ratios.
Figure 10- Ratio of MediPass Enrollees to Accepting Providers within a 30-minute Drive Time: Southwest Florida

Zip codes 34142 (Immokalee), 34266 (Arcadia), 34972 and 34974 (Okeechobee) have high enrollee to provider ratios
Zip codes 32055 (Lake City), 32607, 32609 (Gainesville) and 32177 (Palatka) have high enrollee to provider ratios.
Figure 12 - Ratio of MediPass Enrollees to Accepting Providers within a 30-minute Drive Time: Fort Pierce and Surrounding Areas

Zip codes 34950, 34982 (Ft. Pierce) and 34972 (Okeechobee) have high enrollee to provider ratios.
Zip codes 33040 (Key West) and 33050 (Marathon) have high enrollee to provider ratios.
Figure 14 – MediPass Pediatric Provider Service Areas

The brown color represents areas within 30 minutes of a MediPass pediatric provider. The green areas are not located within 30 minutes of a MediPass pediatric provider. Several communities, indicated by red dots, are without a pediatric provider.
Areas with high enrollee to pediatric provider ratios include Immokalee, Labelle, Okeechobee, Arcadia, Gainesville, Tallahassee, Pensacola, and Century. These areas have relatively few providers.
The pink area represents areas within 30 minutes of a MediPass OB/GYN provider. The green areas are not located within 30 minutes of a MediPass OB/GYN provider. Many communities, indicated by red dots are without OB/GYN physicians within 30 minutes.
Figure 17 – Ratio of Adult Female MediPass Enrollees to Accepting OB/GYN Providers Located within a 30-minute Drive Time

Almost one-third the state appears to have a high patient to provider ratio. This may be an indication of poor access OB/GYN services among women enrolled in MediPass.
References


APPENDIX 1 – DATA COLLECTION SHEET

Provider Name: «PROVIDER_NAME>  Phone: «OFFICE_PHONE»
Address: «ADDRESS»  City: «CITY»  County: «County»  
Practice Type: «Practice_Type»  Specialty: «Specialty»

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<th>Attempt 1</th>
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<td>Taking Kids? Y/N</td>
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