



Factors Surrounding Traveling to Appointments for a Pediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon: Unacceptable Lengths?

Xuyang Song, MD; Alexandria L. Case, BSE; Joshua M. Abzug, MD

Department of Orthopaedics, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland

INTRODUCTION

- A major aspect in the delivery of healthcare involves access to specialists, which introduces a number of difficulties for patients and families who are underinsured or live in areas with limited access to specialized healthcare.
- **Purpose:** To determine which travel logistics may inhibit access to the availability of specialists.

METHODS

- **Study Design:** Survey
- **Sample:** Pediatric orthopaedic patients seen at an urban/suburban outpatient setting.
- **Data:** Assessed logistic travel factors to determine the primary reason for selecting our institution.
- **Statistics:** Simple statistics were performed.

Figure 1. Patient Travel Survey Questions

Pediatric Travel Study

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Office Location visiting (Circle one): Timonium Kernan Chesapeake Columbia

Other: _____

Reason for choosing office (circle one): Distance Convenience Reputation Earliest time available Insurance Reasons Travel Restrictions Other: _____

Length of wait time to get appointment: _____

Time of Travel Time: _____ Minutes

Time of Travel Distance: _____ Miles

Mode of Travel (Circle one): Bus Walking Driving Metro Subway

Other: _____

Wait to see Physician: _____ (minutes)

Cost to see Physician (out of pocket): _____

Satisfaction with seeing provider/specialist: Very Poor Poor Neutral Good

Very Good Excellent

RESULTS

- **Demographics:** 200 pediatric orthopaedic patients were surveyed.
- **Primary Reason for Going to a Particular Clinic:** Office location (43%)
 - **Average Distance Traveled:** 16 miles
- **Secondary Reason for Going to a Particular Clinic:** Appointment availability (31%)
 - **Average Distance Traveled:** 23 miles
- **Total Average Distance Traveled:** 21 miles (Range: 1-175 miles)
- **Total Average Travel Time:** 31 minutes each way (Range: 3-250 minutes)
- **Mode of Transportation:**
 - 95% of patients traveled by car
 - Others utilized a bus or medical mobility.
 - **Average Distance Traveled:** 8 miles
 - **Average Travel Time:** 50 minutes
- Most patients used vacation time to come to an appointment
 - **Lost Wages:** 25% of families
 - **Average Cost:** \$380.

CONCLUSIONS

- Location is the primary reason why patients choose to see a pediatric orthopaedic surgeon at a particular facility, unless the problem was deemed more acute by the parents, therefore the families were more willing to travel longer distances.
- Location, travel distance, public transportation, and loss of vacation time or wages present more difficulties to families needing to access specialized healthcare.