

Overtreatment is common, doctors say

By Nicholas Bakalar, New York Times

Most physicians in the United States believe that overtreatment is harmful, wasteful and common.

Researchers surveyed 2,106 physicians in various specialties regarding their beliefs about unnecessary medical care. On average, the doctors believed that 20.6 percent of all medical care was unnecessary, including 22 percent of prescriptions, 24.9 percent of tests and 11.1 percent of procedures. The study is in PLOS One.

Nearly 85 percent said the reason for overtreatment was fear of malpractice suits, but that fear is probably exaggerated, the authors say. Only 2 to 3 percent of patients pursue litigation, and paid claims have declined sharply in recent decades.

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