

Most docs believe patients get too many medical tests

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But, half of physicians have ordered unneeded tests for pushy patients, survey found.

(HealthDay)—Most physicians believe that doctors order too many medical tests, yet half admit to doing so themselves in response to a pushy patient, a new survey shows.

"Old habits are hard to break, but this research suggests that America's [physicians](#) are slowly making progress in efforts to reduce unnecessary care," said Dr. Richard Baron, president and CEO of the ABIM Foundation, the organization responsible for the study. "Avoiding unnecessary medical care is important because care that is not needed can be harmful to patients, and unnecessary care raises [health care costs](#) for everyone."

The survey of 600 physicians, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, found that more than half of physicians think [doctors](#) are best equipped to solve the problem of unnecessary tests. Just 15 percent of doctors surveyed felt the government could address the problem.

About three-fourths of doctors think the number of unneeded tests and procedures is a very serious or somewhat serious problem. Two-thirds think they have a great amount of responsibility to help patients avoid such tests and procedures.

Seventy-two percent of those surveyed said the typical medical doctor prescribes an unneeded test or procedure at least once a week, according to the survey.

Nearly half of the doctors said that a patient asks for an unnecessary test or procedure at least once a week. Seventy percent of physicians said that when they explain why a test or procedure is unnecessary, their patients usually avoid the test. Still, 53 percent of physicians said they'd ordered an unnecessary [test](#) when a patient insists.

The survey was part of the ABIM Foundation's *Choosing Wisely* initiative, which urges doctors and patients to avoid overused and inappropriate tests.

"It is a promising sign that an increasing number of physicians are accepting responsibility for reducing unnecessary medical care delivered in the United States," said Dr. John Lumpkin, [senior vice president](#) of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in a statement provided by the ABIM Foundation. "Conversations between doctors and [patients](#) about what care really is and isn't necessary have always been hard. Only by shedding light on these issues, and being transparent about which tests and procedures might not be needed, will we help create a sustainable culture of health in America."

More information: For more about the *Choosing Wisely* program, visit the [ABIM Foundation](#).

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