

How do we optimize time with patients in primary care?

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(HealthDay)—Primary care providers (PCPs) can improve the productivity of face-to-face visits with patients by identifying activities that can be delegated to another team member or performed using a different modality, according to research published in the August issue of the *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*.

Mary Pelak, M.S.W., of the Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and colleagues videotaped 121 PCP office visits at four Veterans Health Administration Medical Centers. Two physicians reviewed the recordings of each visit and independently judged which tasks in designated activity categories could be reassigned to another team member or a different modality.

According to the researchers, the reviewers deemed that 53 percent of the 5,398 minutes of rated visit time could be reassigned to another team

member or a different modality. The percentage of time for which face-to-face PCP care was considered necessary varied by activity category, from a high of 73.9 percent for examining patients to a low of 16.2 percent for reviewing medications. Agreement between the raters in determining the suitability of tasks for reassignment varied by the activity category.

"These data provide a window into how the focus of face-to-face PCP visit time might change as primary care practices seek to shift some components of [patient care](#) to other health care team members and to other modalities such as telephone- or web-based communications," the authors write.

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