

Panel size of 2,500 patients per doc not feasible in primary care

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(HealthDay)—An often quoted standard panel size of 2,500 patients per

physician seems not to be appropriate for primary care, according to a study published in the July-August issue of the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*.

Melanie Raffoul, M.D., from the Robert Graham Center in Washington, D.C., and colleagues examined the appropriateness of a panel size of 2,500, which is often quoted in the literature anecdotally.

The researchers found that a panel size of 2,500 was cited in an article from 2000 but was not based on data or a review of actual panel sizes. This size panel has been found to be incompatible with adequate management of chronic illness, and with provision of preventive care services. Shorter patient wait times were seen with reduced panel size, as were longer visits and enhanced overall continuity of care. In primary care, average panel sizes are closer to 1,200 to 1,900 patients per [primary care physician](#). It is not known whether these panels are small enough to allow for optimal productivity, quality of care, and physician and patient satisfaction. Variation is likely based on patient population, practice structure, and community.

"Appropriate panel size deserves greater attention at the policy and practice levels if [primary care](#) is to function at its best for physicians and [patients](#)," the authors write.

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