

*A survey of Physical Therapy practices conducted through the membership of the American Association of Orthopedic Executives (AAOE). The compiled results of the 131 survey participants with additional comments by the author are included.*

# **AAOE Physical Therapy Survey**

*White Paper with  
Summary Results*

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## ***Executive Summary***

The survey information presented over the following pages was collected through a Survey Monkey presented to the American Association of Orthopedic Executives (AAOE) membership through both the AAOE Listserv and a link sent to the AAOE membership via e-mail. The initial goal was to collect information relevant to the management of physical therapy practices in order to help the author prepare for an upcoming lecture at the AAOE 2016 Annual Conference in San Francisco from June 9 - 12 of 2016 entitled "Physical Therapy: Balancing Quality and Productivity". 43 members participated in the survey through an invitation and link posted on the AAOE Listserv in September of 2015 and an additional 88 participated through the link sent to the AAOE membership in October of 2015. In total, 131 administrators participated in the survey.

According to the survey results, these 131 administrators represented 1,419.0 physical therapists (PT's) and physical therapists assistants (PTA's). Also, the participants represented 2,452.5 orthopedic surgeons and orthopedic physician assistants. This represents an average of 0.6 physical therapy staff members for every 1.0 FTE of orthopedic providers.

Participants were surveyed about:

- The time they allow for PT Evaluations
- Time scheduled for follow up visits
- Whether or not the office double books patients
- The average number of patients seen by PT's and PTA's in an 8 hour day
- Units charged per average physical therapy visit
- Average cancellation/no show rates
- Whether or not productivity statistics are measured on an individual basis
- Whether or not their PT's know how many patients they have on program

The results of the survey were quite interesting. While most offices scheduled evaluations on a 60 minute basis and follow up visits every 30 minutes, there is enough variation to indicate alternative approaches that may increase the productivity of clinicians. While most offices do occasionally double book patients, it is clear that caution has been exercised to not allow double booking of Medicare patients.

The survey results showed an interesting, non-linear relationship for the average number of patients seen by both PT's and PTA's. With peaks at the lower end and higher end, clearly there are significant variations with productivity expectations among practices. Survey results for units per visit were more standardized with almost half of physical therapy providers charging between 3.0 and 3.9 units per visit. Survey results for cancellation no show rates were more standardized with slightly more than 30% of practices reporting a cancellation no show rate of 5.0% or less and over 57% of practices reporting a cancellation no show rate lower than 10%.

Results were encouraging as they indicated that more than 77% of practices were actively collecting individual productivity statistics on their physical therapy staff. The survey did not assess the actual productivity data points that were collected by individual practices. Lastly, the survey results indicated

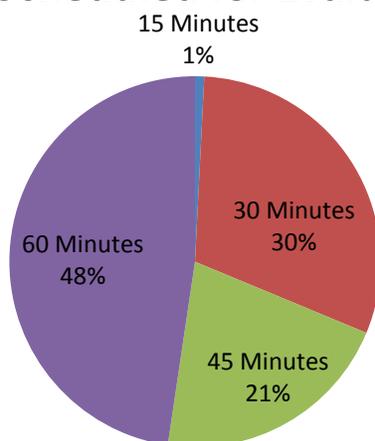
that less than half of the practices indicated that their PT's know how many patients they have on program at any particular moment.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey.

### Question #1: How much time do your PT's have scheduled for Evaluations?

Answer Options	Percent	Count
15 Minutes	0.8%	1
30 Minutes	30.5%	39
45 Minutes	21.1%	27
60 Minutes	47.7%	61
<i>answered question</i>		<b>128</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>3</b>

### Time Scheduled for Evaluations



### Comments from Survey Participants

- Medicare Spines-60 minutes
- It's 45 min at one location and 60 at another
- NA - MO practice
- We have different time periods for different types of evaluations.
- 30 minutes for patients with commercial insurance, 45 minutes for patients with Medicare
- 40 minutes
- 30-40 minutes depending on location
- 45 min for Medicare
- It's usually evaluation plus 1 treatment charge
- Unless Medicare, then we book out 1 hour due to billing requirements

**Author's Note:** *The amount of time dedicated to PT evaluations can be influenced by a number of factors. Offices with an electronic medical record (EMR) and/or patient portal may have shorter evaluation times as much of the past medical history and history of present illness is easily accessible to*

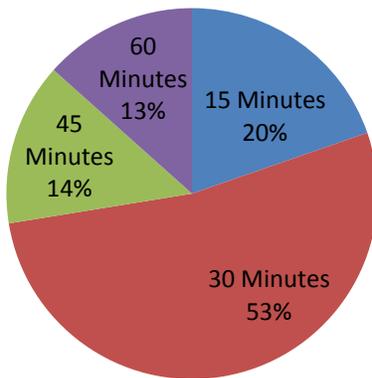
the PT prior to the initial PT evaluation. Also, the impact of cancellation and no show evaluations will have a higher impact on offices that allow for longer evaluation times. Offices are encouraged to measure the rate of cancellation and no shows for evaluations to best understand the impact within their offices. Lastly, based on the survey comments, it is clear that offices have established rules regarding PT evaluations that are specific for Medicare patients.

Further survey study would be of interest with this question to ascertain trending for duration of PT evaluations. Further questioning would reveal if there is a likely trend towards shorter PT Evaluations or if other clinical factors assist in the determination.

**Question #2: How much time are Follow Up Visits given in your PT/PTA schedules?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
15 minutes	19.7%	25
30 minutes	52.8%	67
45 minutes	14.2%	18
60 minutes	13.4%	17
<i>answered question</i>		<b>127</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>4</b>

**Time in Schedule for Follow Ups**



**Comments from Survey Participants**

- Seen for over 30 min but booked in a 30 min time slot.
- 2 patients scheduled for the hour, so in effect 30 min each
- Pts are scheduled every 15 minutes and will be treated for approximately an hour.
- PT and PTA follow ups are different, so combining both in one question does not allow true picture.
- Times vary.
- 40 minutes for Medicare

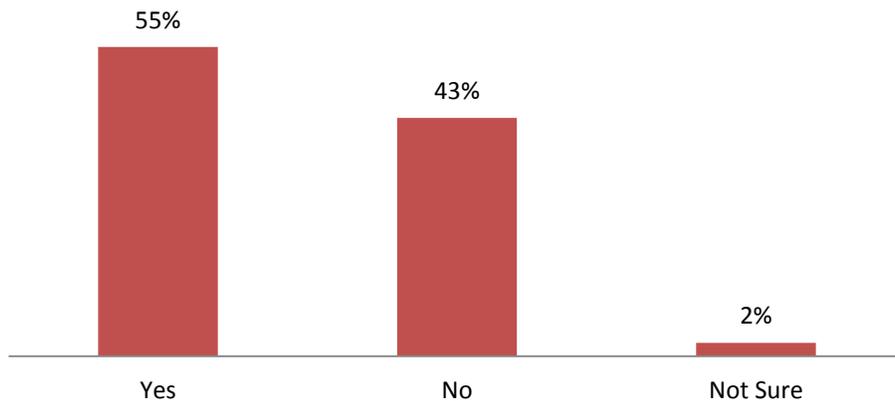
- 30 if a Medicare patient
- 45 min for Medicare
- 30 minutes or less depending on the type treatment
- Unless Medicare, then we book out one hour if needed due to billing requirements

**Author's Note:** Again there is a trend revealed through participant comments towards specific rules for duration of follow up visits for patients insured by Medicare. With a clear majority of offices that schedule appointments every 30 minutes, it is interesting to see that more than 27% of offices schedule appointments for longer than 30 minutes. Further clarification would be interesting to ascertain if patients are seen individually or concurrently in these defined time periods.

**Question #3: Do your PT's/PTA's regularly double book patients at some point in their schedules?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	55.1%	70
No	42.5%	54
Not Sure	2.4%	3
<i>answered question</i>		<b>127</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>4</b>

**Do Your Therapists Regularly Double Book?**



**Comments from Survey Participants**

- 1- 1.2 pts/day average.
- We allow if commercial or billing rules allow.
- One in the morning & one in the afternoon to account for 10-15% cancellation rate.
- As needed early and late.
- Not for Medicare.
- Yes, but not regularly.
- Sometimes.

- Our Medicare Volume is too high to double book.
- It happens occasionally.
- 2-3 therapists regularly have one to two double booked appointments each day, out of 25 therapists.
- We book every half hour.
- Infrequently, but does happen sometimes.
- Times vary based upon need.
- On occasion if they are short staffed due to vacations, but not every day.
- This does happen sometimes if we have enough techs on the schedule. We do not double book evaluations.
- Except for Medicare
- We team the PT and PTA, so they have two patients per slot, but we since there is one clinician for every patient, we don't consider that double booked.

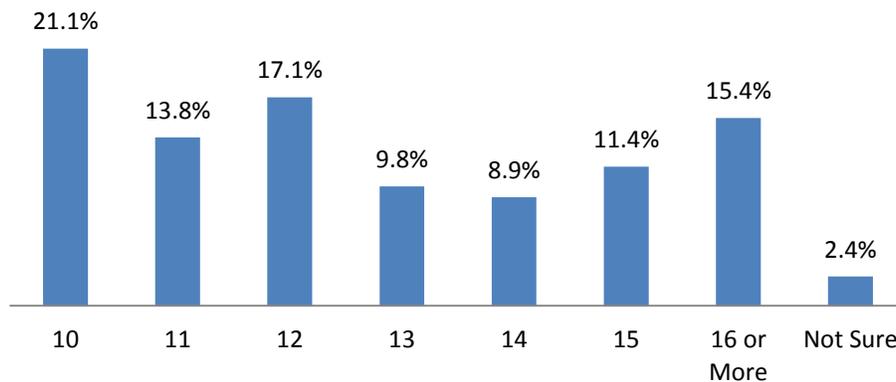
**Author's Note:** *With more than 55% of offices regularly double booking patients at some point in their schedules, it is clear that this may have important ties to the previous question regarding the duration of follow up appointments. The rate of double booking appointments appeared to have a correlation with the duration of the appointment. For example, 45% of offices that scheduled patients every 30 minutes reported that they regularly double book patients at some point in their schedules and 87% of offices that scheduled patients every 60 minutes reported double booking.*

*It is encouraging to read through participant comments the discipline employed by offices to function within the rules of Medicare.*

**Question #4: What is the average number of patients your PT's see in an 8 hour day?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
10	21.1%	26
11	13.8%	17
12	17.1%	21
13	9.8%	12
14	8.9%	11
15	11.4%	14
16 or More	15.4%	19
Not Sure	2.4%	3
	<b><i>answered question</i></b>	<b>123</b>
	<b><i>skipped question</i></b>	<b>8</b>

## Average Number of Patients Seen by PT's in an 8 Hour Day



### Comments from Survey Participants

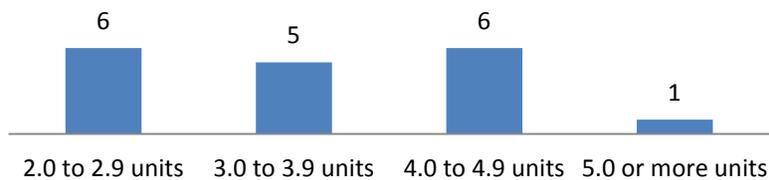
- Our production goal is 11. We have several new PTs pulling the average down right now.
- Actually it's more like 8-9.
- 14-18.
- Our goal is 12
- Ours work 10 hour days and average about 8-10
- We schedule for 1.5 patients per hour and double book when necessary / possible which works out to 12-14 per day.
- One per hour.

**Author's Note:** The weighted average for the number of patients seen by PT's in an 8 hour day is 12.7. There was a wide range of responses that did not fall into the expected bell curve with a peak at the mean. As a matter of fact, the opposite occurred with a peak at lower volumes and a peak at higher volumes. The results revealed an interesting question; is the average Units per Visit charged different for those who see the least versus those who see the most patients? The two following charts demonstrate the breakdown of Units per Visit charged by PT's who saw an average of 10 patients per 8 hour day with those who saw 16 or more patients per 8 hour day. The Units per Visit did demonstrate the expected bell curve for those who averaged 10 patients per 8 hour day, but did not for those who saw 16 or more patients per 8 hour day.

### Units per Visit Breakdown for PT's Seeing 10 Patients per 8 Hour Day



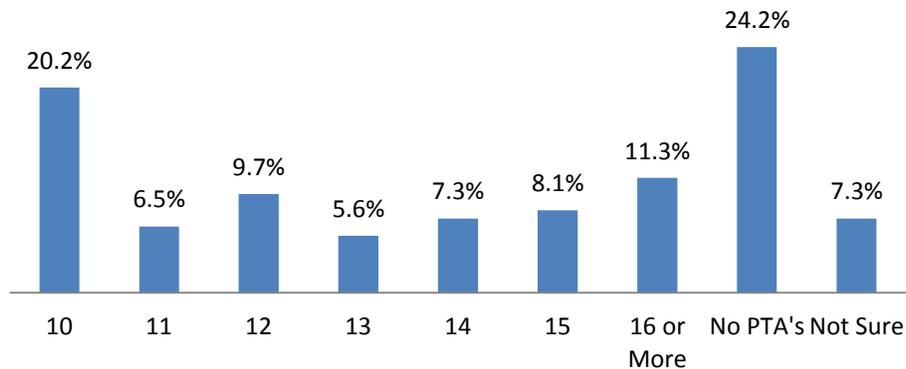
### Units per Visit Breakdown for PT's Seeing 16 or More Visits per 8 Hour Day



**Question #5: What is the average number of patients your PTA's see in an 8 hour day?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
10	20.2%	25
11	6.5%	8
12	9.7%	12
13	5.6%	7
14	7.3%	9
15	8.1%	10
16 or More	11.3%	14
We do not have any Physical	24.2%	30
Not Sure	7.3%	9
<i>answered question</i>		<b>124</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>7</b>

## Average Number of Patients Seen by PTA's in an 8 Hour Day



### Comments from Survey Participants

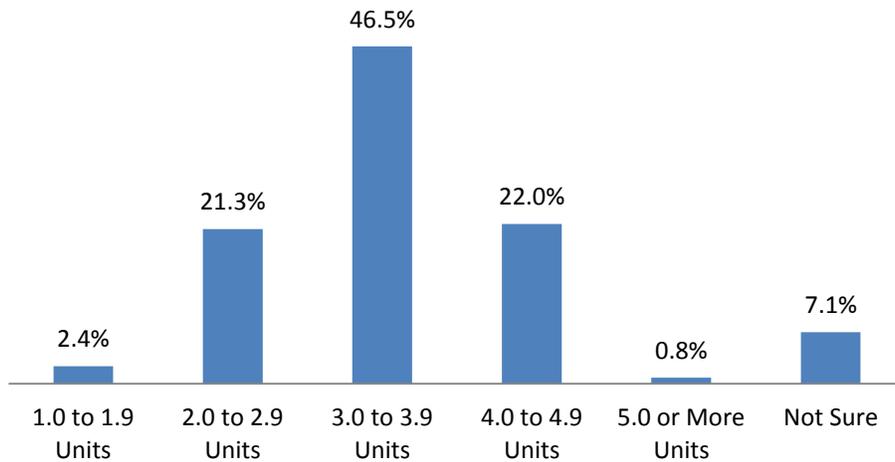
- 7 is the most accurate number.
- The PT and PTA are on a team together and are expected to see 90 patients per week.
- 9 per 8 hour day.
- 16-18.
- Our goal is 14.
- Same as for PT's.
- One per hour.

**Author's Note:** The weighted average for the number of patients seen by PTA's in an 8 hour day is 12.6. Again, there is a wide range of responses demonstrating a variation in productivity expectations of PTA's. Of note, slightly more than 24% of all participants identified that they do not employ PTA's in their practice.

### Question #6: How many Units per Visit, on average, do your PT's/PTA's generate with each follow up visit?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1.0 to 1.9 units	2.4%	3
2.0 to 2.9 units	21.3%	27
3.0 to 3.9 units	46.5%	59
4.0 to 4.9 units	22.0%	28
5.0 or more units	0.8%	1
Not Sure	7.1%	9
<b>answered question</b>		<b>127</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>4</b>

## Average Units per Visit



### Comments from Survey Participants

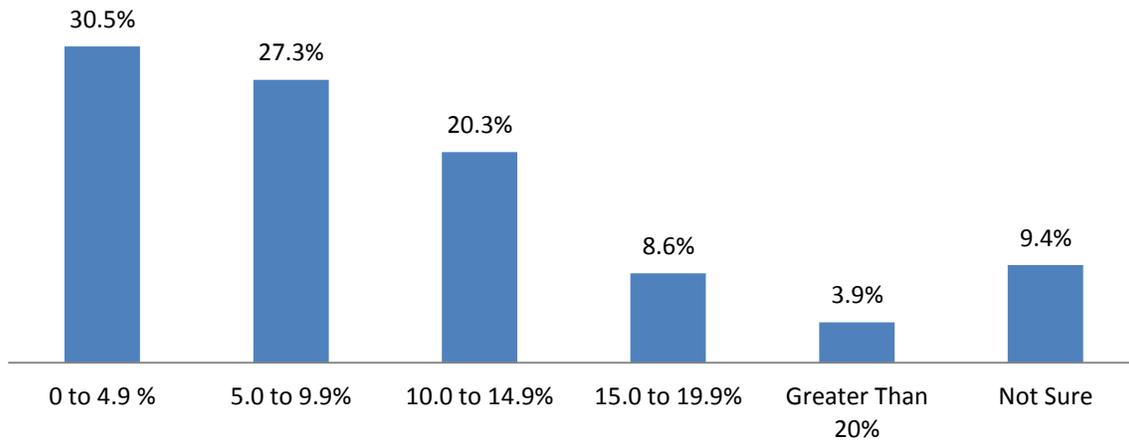
- We have a goal of 3.7 units, but I don't have great software to be able to track this. But it is close.
- Not accurate as PT and PTA have different follow up times.
- Insurance companies now have a limit so it would have been 3-4 in the past but lower due to insurance restrictions on units.
- More like 2.5-3.5.
- Most of our contracts a flat fee, we do not record units, other than in the note.

**Author's Note:** The results do conform to the expected bell curve. 24% of the practices that average 4.0 to 4.9 units per visit see an average of 16 or more visits per 8 hour day. This subset only represents 6 of the 131 participating practices.

### Question #7: What is your average Cancellation/No Show Rate for appointments in Physical Therapy?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0 to 4.9%	30.5%	39
5.0 to 9.9%	27.3%	35
10.0 to 14.9%	20.3%	26
15.0 to 19.9%	8.6%	11
Greater than 20%	3.9%	5
Not Sure	9.4%	12
	<b>answered question</b>	<b>128</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>	<b>3</b>

## Average Cancellation/No Show Rate



### Comments from Survey Participants

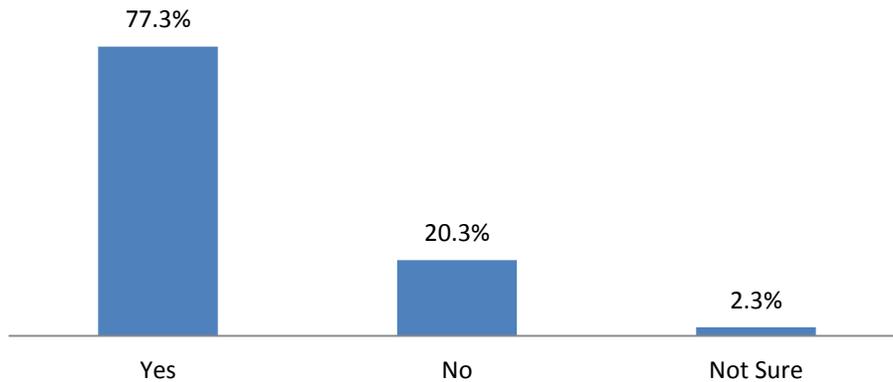
- We charge for No Shows or late cancels.
- I am setting up appointment confirmations right now with Relatient due to the cancellations/no show rate of about 8%.
- Just started tracking. Working to reduce.
- We charge for no shows.

**Author's Note:** The weighted average for the cancellation no show rate of participating practices was 10.9%. Further detailed review of the responses reveals a significant correlation between visits per day and the cancellation no show rate. The practices with the lower cancellation no show rates experienced a higher average visits per day.

### Question #8: Do you measure individual productivity statistics in Physical Therapy?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	77.3%	99
No	20.3%	26
Not Sure	2.3%	3
<b>answered question</b>		<b>128</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>3</b>

## Do You Measure Individual Productivity?



### Comments from Survey Participants

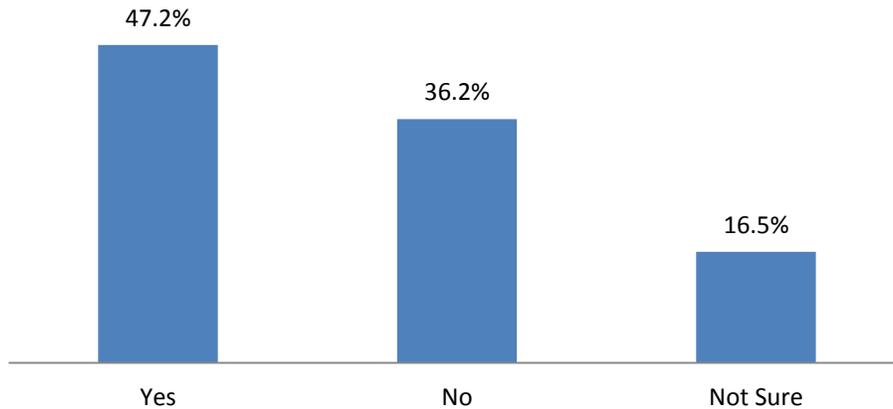
- Our director measures productivity.
- I do not have the direct management of this area and due to office construction, they are temporarily off-site.
- Patients per day over the course of a year - work RVU's - patient satisfaction - service audits are the measurements for PT/OT/PTA in our practice.
- We track the number of patients that each PT treats each month.

***Author's Note:** Measuring the individual productivity of clinicians provides both a means to compare the performance of your top producing therapists with those who see less as well as provide a manner to build a multifactorial incentive program to build productivity.*

### Question #9: Is it a priority for your Physical Therapists to know how many patients they have on program at any particular time?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	47.2%	60
No	36.2%	46
Not Sure	16.5%	21
<i>answered question</i>		<b>127</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>4</b>

## Priority for PT's to Know Number of Patients on Program



### Comments from Survey Participants

- They do know that we are watching their cancellation rate and number of weekly visits. I get a report each week for both.

**Author's Note:** The 36.2% of PT's who do not measure the number of patients they have on program run the risk of losing track of patients who require skilled PT. For example, without a list of patients, a PT could easily lose track of a post-surgical patient who needs therapy but stopped attending for some unknown reason.

### Question #10: How many of the following do you have at your practice?

Answer Options	Response Count
PT's & PTA's?	1,419.0
MD's & PA's?	2,452.5
<i>answered question</i>	<b>129</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>2</b>

**Author's Note:** The average number of PT's/PTA's per MD/PA is 0.6.