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MyChart Messaging: Patient Preferences about Timing of Provider Responses to Medical Advice Requests

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Patient Preferences about Timeliness of Provider Responses to MyChart Advice Messages

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Introduction

- Patients utilize MyChart messaging for **convenient access** to their physician.¹
- MyChart messaging allows patients to **engage** in their health care, leading to **greater patient satisfaction**.^{2,3}
- MyChart messaging has been shown to improve **reliability** of communication and increase **quality** of primary care.^{4,5}
- Portal messages have grown 157% since 2020, **increasing physician workload**.^{6,7}
- Patients note issues with the MyChart platform, including **technological barriers** and inconsistent provider response patterns.⁸
- Elucidating patient preferences about MyChart messaging may **improve patient-provider communication**, potentially providing solutions that could decrease physician response burden.

Methods

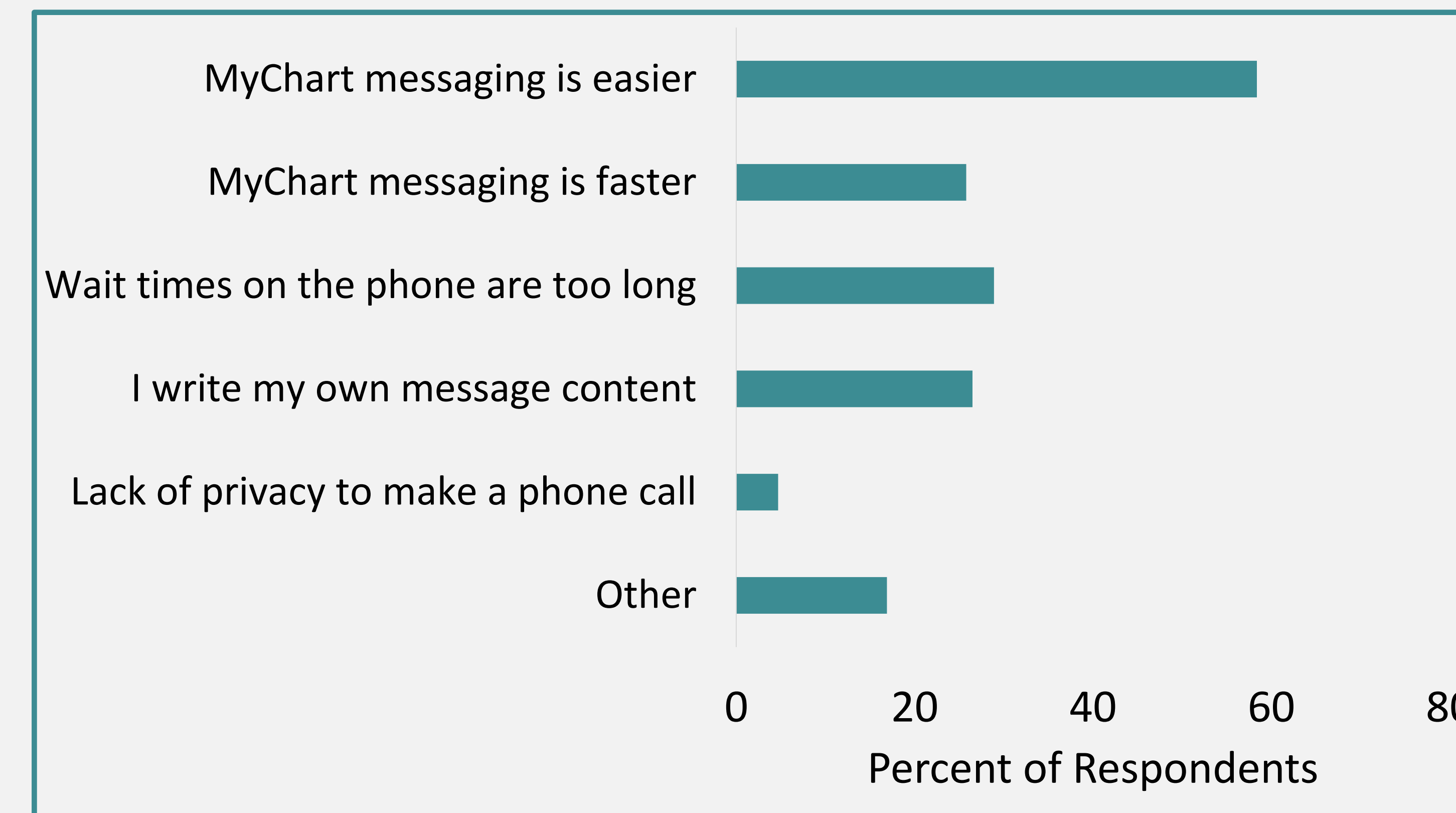
- Designed and built a 12-question REDCap survey.
 - Multiple choice questions
 - Short answer questions
 - Demographic information: gender, age, occupation
- Survey was sent via MyChart message to 31,502 patients in 8 University of Vermont Medical Center-affiliated adult primary care and family medicine practices.
 - Only sent to patients who had used MyChart in the past year
- Survey was closed after 1 week.
 - Data analyzed in excel and SPSS
 - Several patients reached out with feedback via email

Results

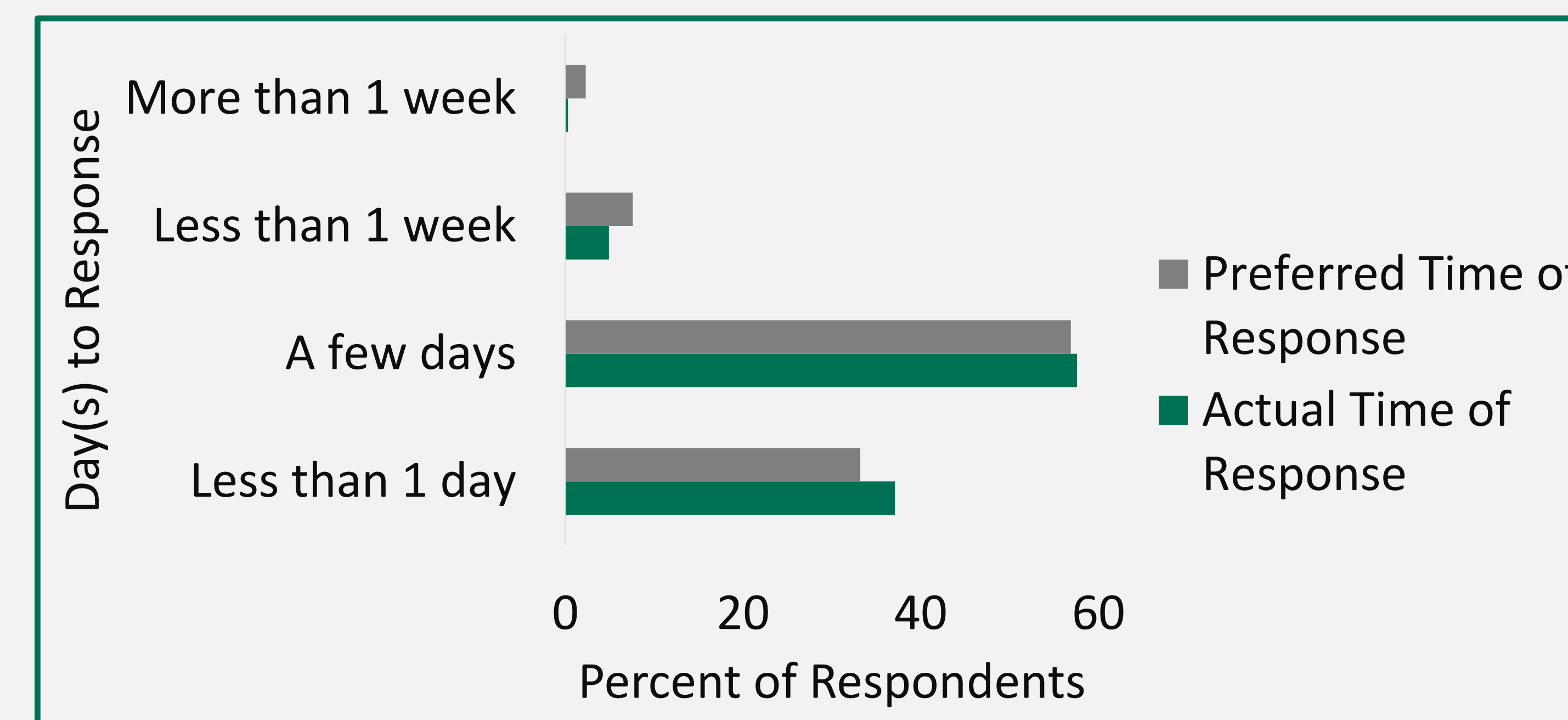
- 2011 respondents; 6.4% response rate
- Respondent self-identified genders:
 - Male (36.5%), Female (62%), Transgender (0.1%), Non-Binary (0.5%), Prefer not to specify (0.8%)
- Respondent ages:
 - 18-39 (11%), 40-64 (36%), 65-80 (48%), over 80 (5%)
- 77% of respondents used MyChart to ask a “medical advice question”.
- 71.3% of patients used the “ask a medical question” either yearly or several times a year.
- MyChart messaging is always or often (69.1%) the first method used to contact healthcare provider.

Results

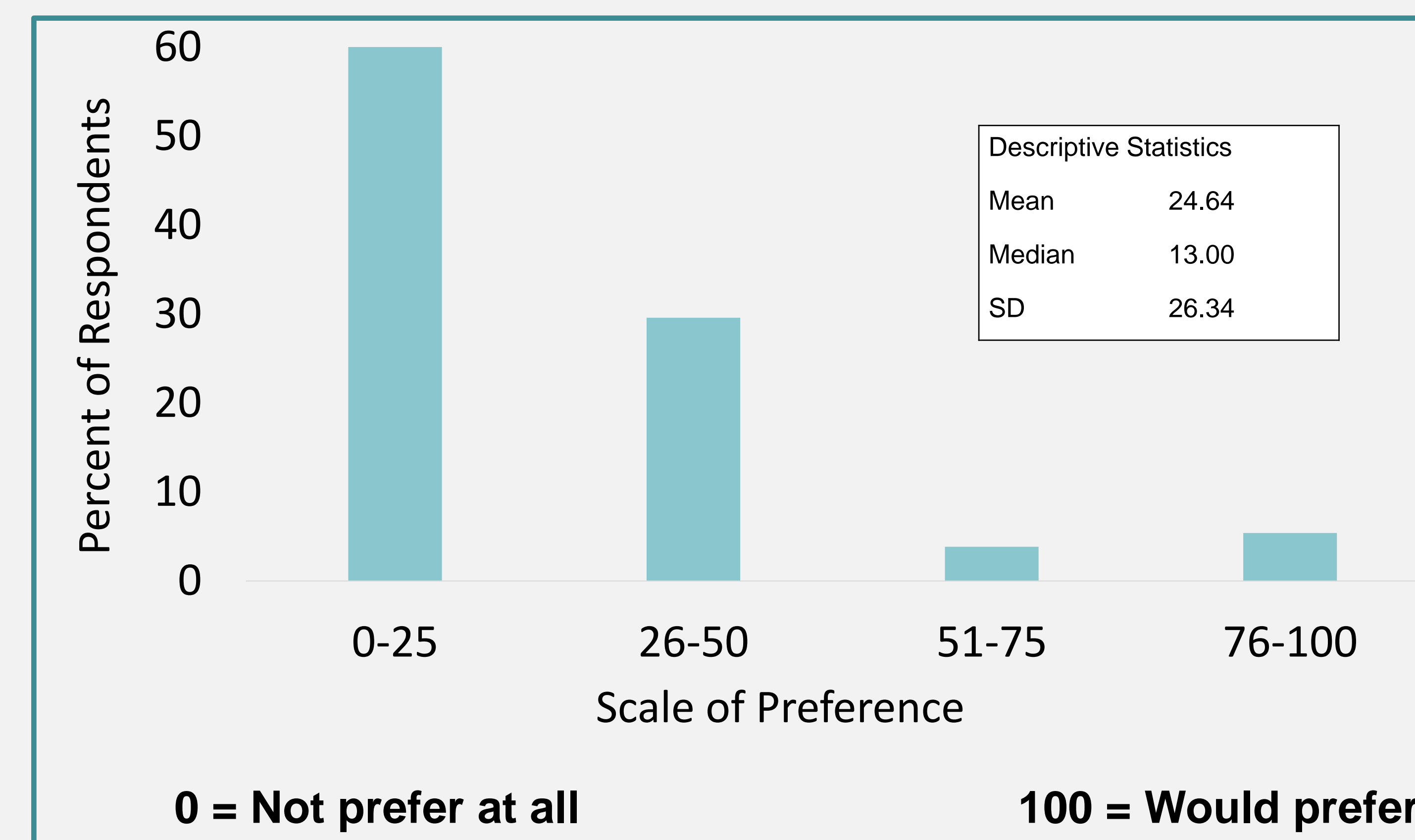
Reasons for Using MyChart



Expectations About Timing of Provider Responses



Limiting Patient Ability to Send Messages



Discussion

- Most patients use MyChart as the **first method** to contact their healthcare provider, which may explain the increase in physician workload.
- Patients **prefer fast responses** from their providers and providers are meeting this preference.
- Patients use MyChart for several reasons:
 - Some patients send **urgent MyChart messages**, which is not the intended use of the platform
 - Patients believe that MyChart messaging is **easier** and **faster** than calling
- Most patients would **prefer to not restrict messaging** to business hours.
- Patient suggestions should inform future MyChart platform design.
- Survey limitations:
 - Small response rate with limited diversity of respondents
 - Only generalizable to those patients who are using MyChart
 - Data limited to Vermont and may not generalize beyond the state

Future Work and Recommendations

- Use data from Epic to determine if patient perceptions align with MyChart message records, for example comparing patients’ actual follow-up messages to their reported follow-up messages.
- Pilot study to better observe the relationship between provider response time and patient preferences for physician response time.
- Patient education about types of communication:
 - When a message should be sent in MyChart versus a phone call made
 - What to expect when patients call their provider

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