



# Musculoskeletal Specialist Community Outreach Patterns: A Pilot Study

Abby J. Warren, B.A.; Michael J. Khadavi, M.D.; and Robert R. Conway, M.D.

University of Missouri, Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation; Columbia, Missouri



## Objective

To determine the major reasons for and in opposition to volunteerism toward the care of uninsured patients among musculoskeletal specialty physicians.

## Methods

- Voluntary, anonymous, cross-sectional online questionnaire
- Offered to physiatrists, orthopedic surgeons, rheumatologists and primary care sports medicine physicians in large practices in Saint Louis, Kansas City and Columbia, Missouri
- Physicians were offered the questionnaire in June and July 2012

## Results

Of physicians who had not volunteered in the past, 68% were interested in volunteering their expertise to uninsured patients in the future.

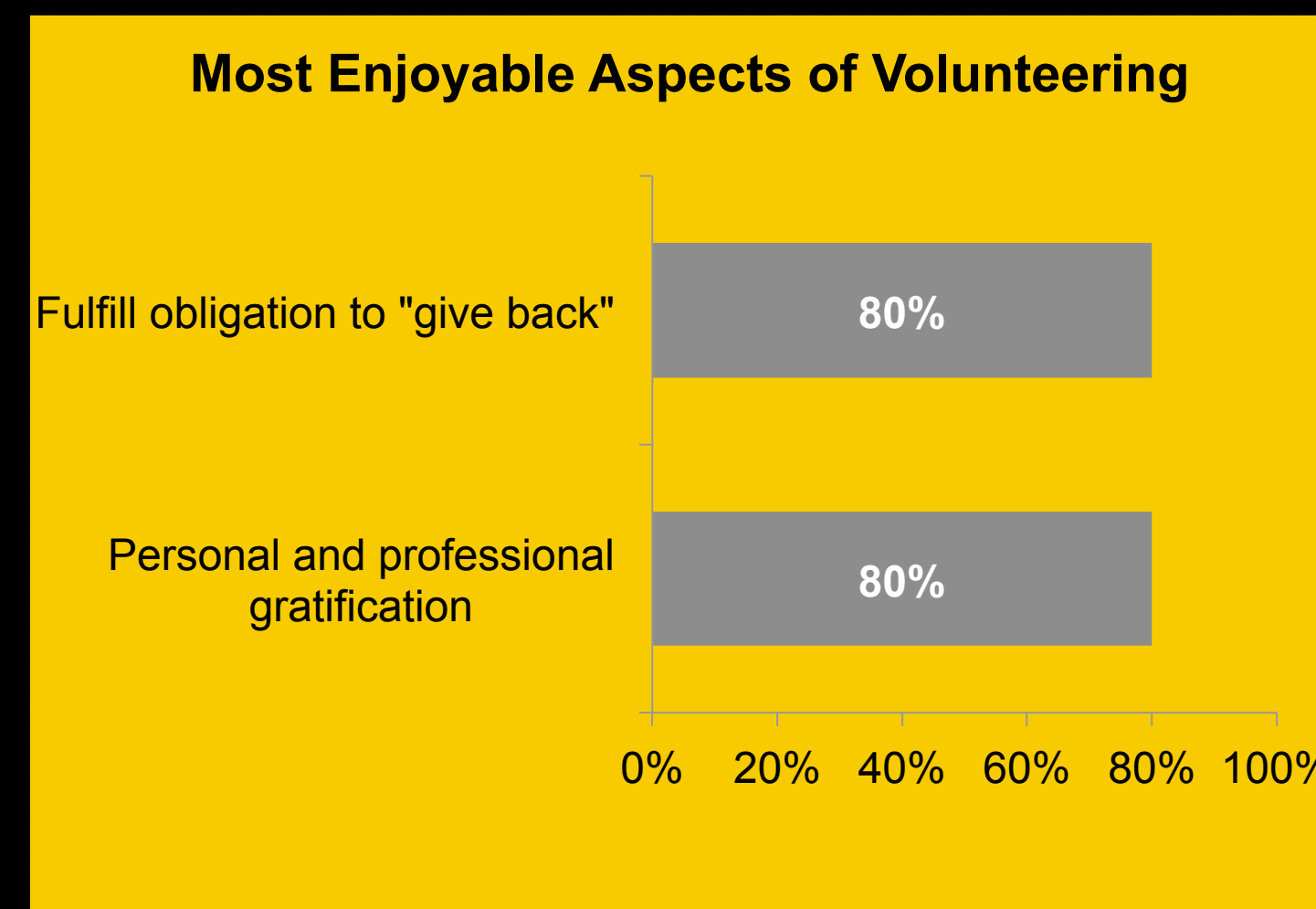
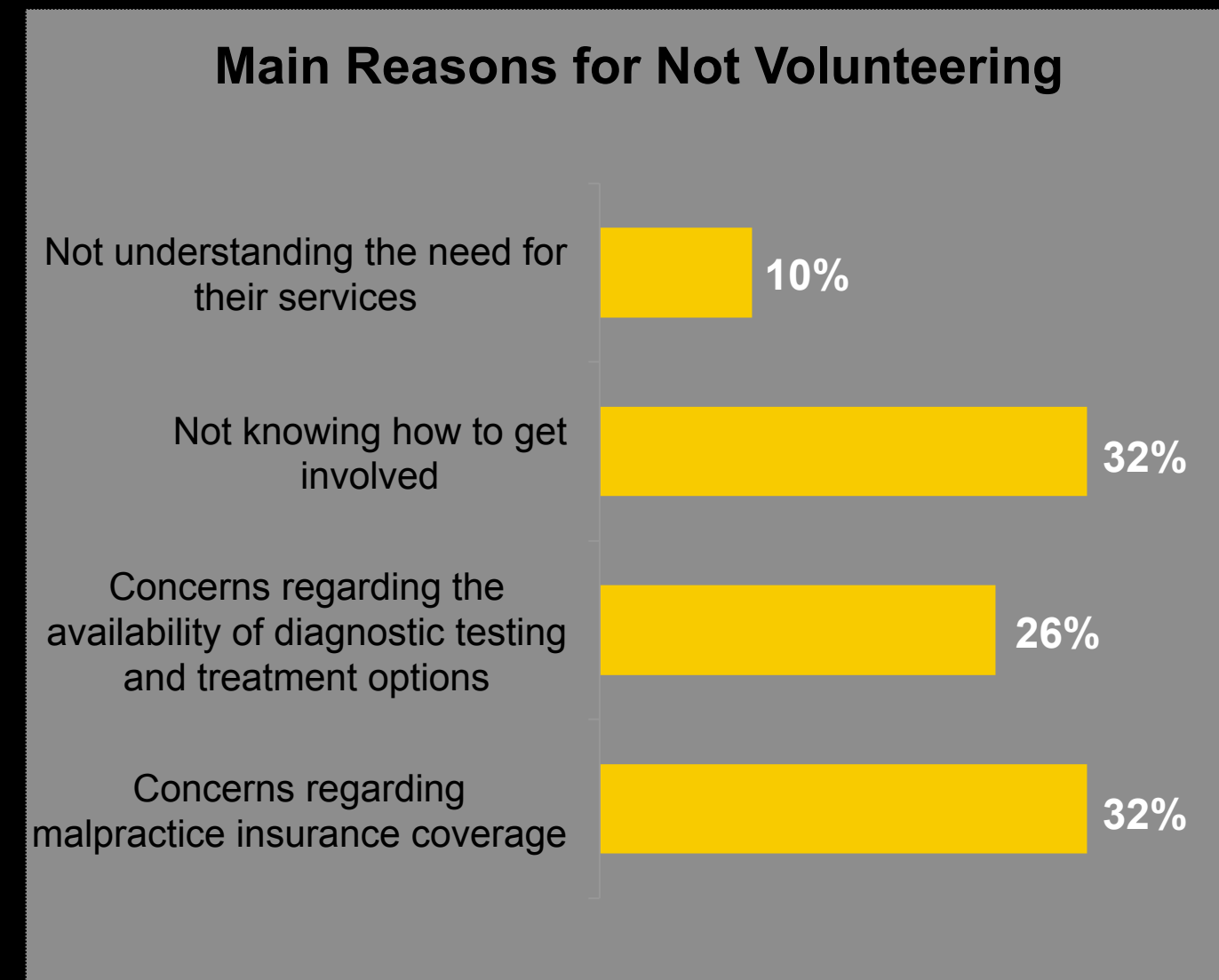
Leading reasons for not volunteering included:

- Concerns about malpractice insurance coverage
- Belief that diagnostic testing and treatment options are not available
- Not knowing how to get involved
- Not understanding the need for their services

Among physicians who had previously volunteered, the most enjoyable aspects of volunteering were personal and professional gratification and fulfilling the obligation to “give back.”

## Respondents by Specialty

Orthopedic Surgery	Physiatry	Rheumatology	Sports Medicine
13	8	5	1

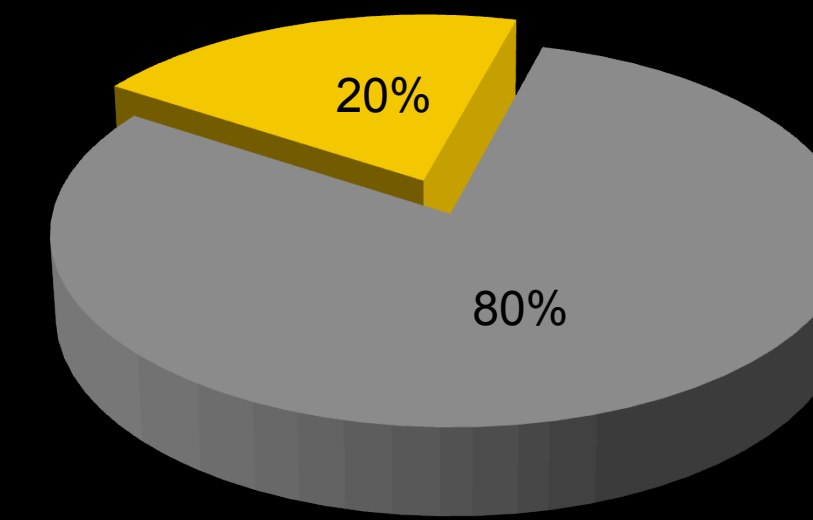


## Conclusions

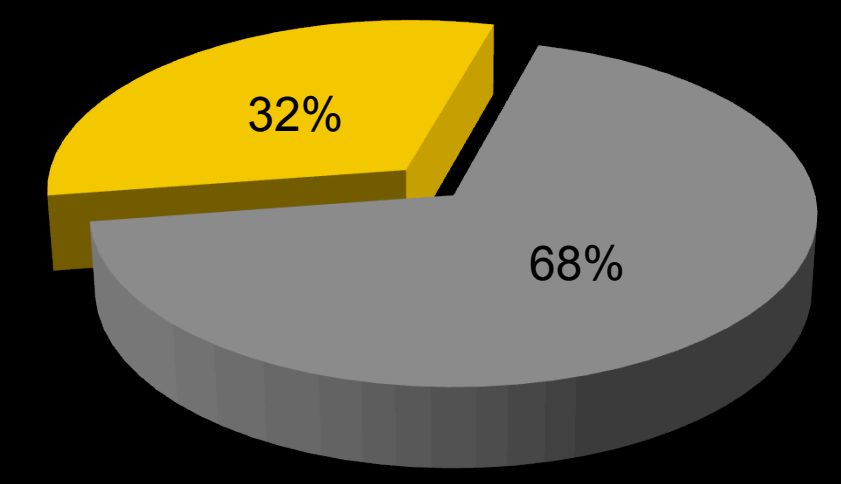
Although a majority of musculoskeletal specialty physicians in the Midwest are interested in donating their services towards the care of the uninsured, few currently do so.

Enhanced awareness of the need for their services, the availability of diagnostic and treatment options and malpractice coverage may improve volunteerism among musculoskeletal specialists.

## Past Volunteerism



## Interest in Volunteering



■ Have Not Volunteered  
■ Have Volunteered

■ Interested in Volunteering  
■ Not Interested in Volunteering

## Future Directions

To improve volunteerism among musculoskeletal specialists, free clinics should increase physician education in the areas of

- Malpractice coverage
- Available diagnostic and treatment options
- The need for their services

Using the information from this pilot study, conduct a similar study on a larger scale surveying physiatrists, orthopedic surgeons, rheumatologists and sports medicine physicians nation wide.