

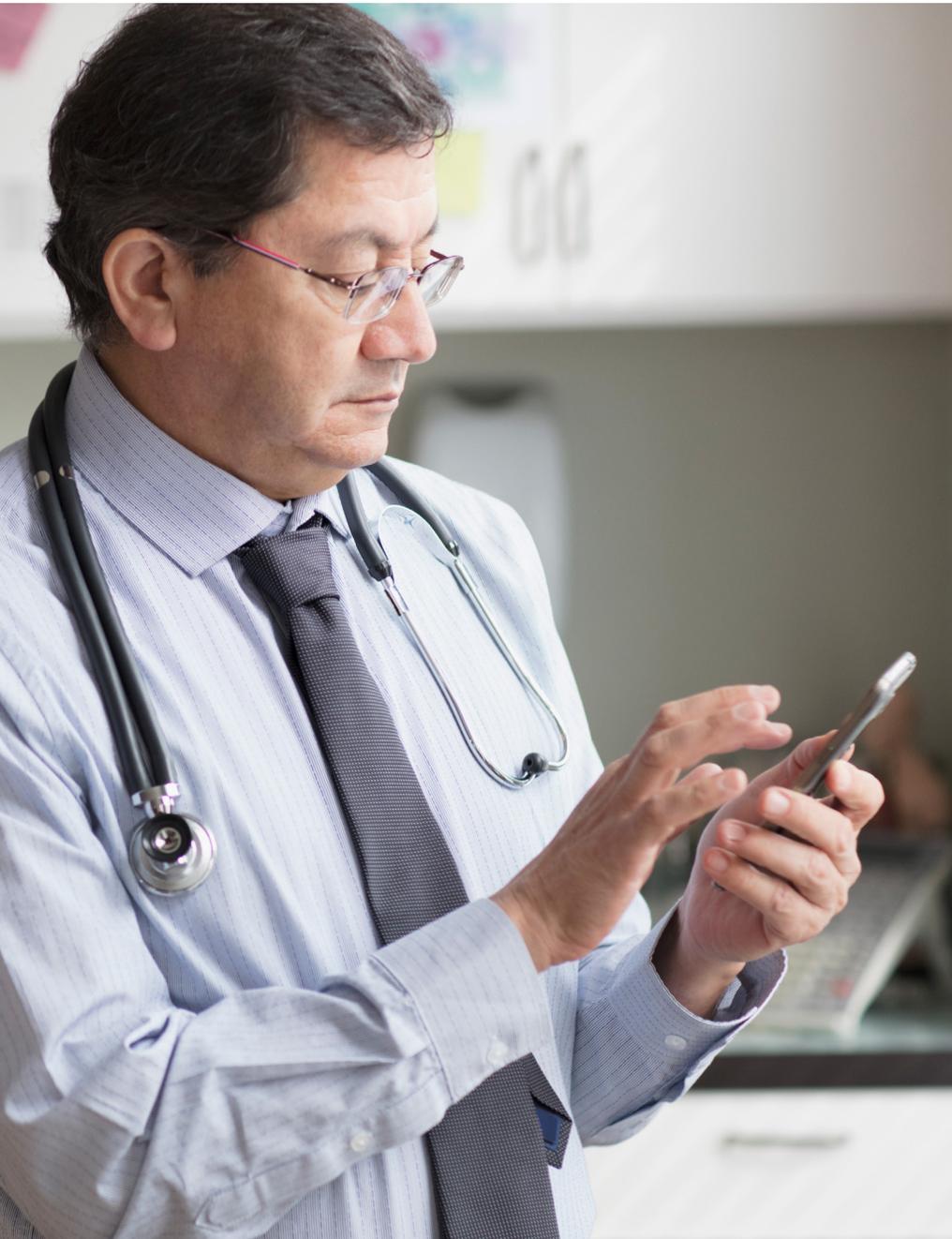


# Physician Learning Preferences

*A Doximity Report*



*October 2022*



## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Attitudes About Life-Long Learning	4
Learning Habits During the Workday	5
Learning Habits During Free Time	6
Preferences for Relevance and Specificity	7
Preferences for Online and Mobile Content	8
Preferred Topics for Online Learning	9
Interest in Clinical Trial Recruitment	10
Content Channel and Source Preferences	11
Preferences for Brevity	12
Attitudes About Engaging with Industry Sales Representatives	13
Noteworthy Trends in Oncology	14
Conclusion	15
Methodology	16
Sources	17
About Doximity	18

## Introduction

As a society, we have never asked for more from physicians than we do today. Physicians across the U.S. are facing heightened demand, excessive workloads, and crisis levels of work-related burnout.

Along with growing caseloads, physicians are uniquely tasked with the challenge of life-long learning. With tens of thousands of treatments and medical devices available and over 20,000 clinical trials currently recruiting patients in the U.S. alone, keeping up is no easy feat.<sup>1,2</sup> In fact, a recent study published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* found that in order **to provide guideline-recommended care, a primary care physician would need to do nearly 26.7 hours of clinical work per day.**<sup>3</sup>

In order to better understand how physicians prefer to engage with medical news and educational information, Doximity surveyed over 600 physicians across five specialties that treat some of the most complex and multifactorial diseases: oncology, neurology, cardiology, endocrinology and gastroenterology.

## Findings

We found that the vast majority of physicians surveyed are interested in learning about new research, treatments and trials that can help improve outcomes in their patients, but most are overwhelmed by the amount of information to keep up with. To stay up to date, physicians often engage with content online (including between patient visits), prefer practice-specific content sourced from experts, and often sacrifice their free time to keep current with the latest medical news and information.

We believe the accelerating pace of medical innovation, influx of medical news and information, and growing physician shortage will continue to drive a need for content that is relevant, useful, and sensitive to the workloads and challenges physicians face today.

## Physician Attitudes About Life-Long Learning

The overwhelming majority (95%) of physicians surveyed are interested in learning about new trials, treatments or procedures that could help improve outcomes in their patients.

However, nearly 7 out of 10 physicians (68%) report they often feel overwhelmed by the amount of information they have to keep up with.

These findings suggest that even though physicians may feel a strong desire or commitment to help improve patient outcomes, the reality of consistent life-long learning is overwhelming an already stretched physician workforce.



**9 of 10**

physicians are interested in learning about new trials, treatments or procedures that could help improve outcomes in their patients



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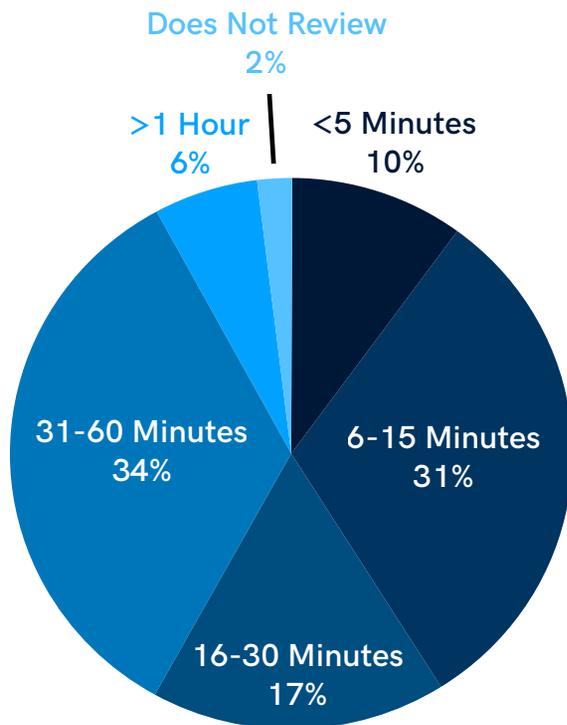
physicians are overwhelmed by the amount of new research, clinical trials, products, treatments or procedures to keep up with

## Physician Learning Habits During the Workday

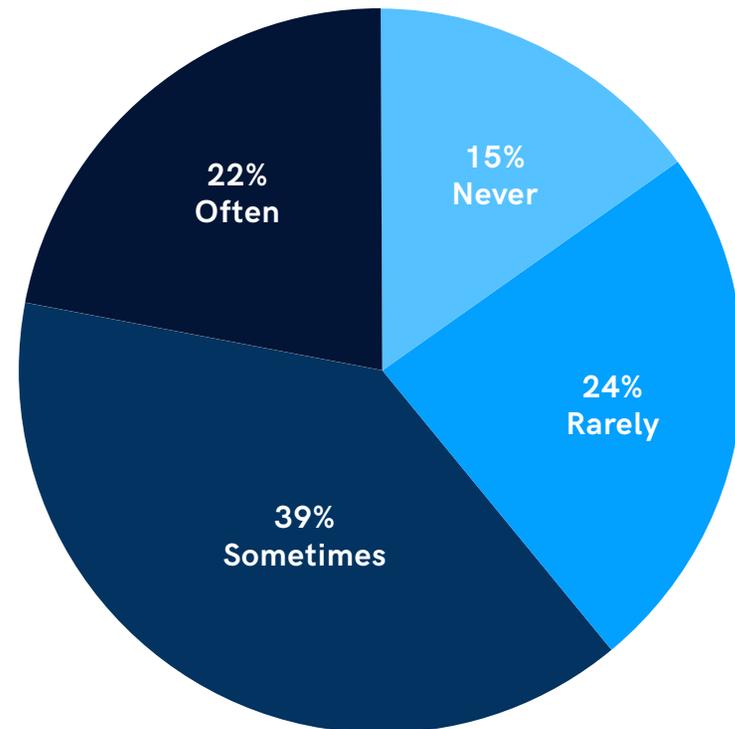
In an effort to stay up to date, over 98% of physicians surveyed report they engage with medical news or educational information during the average workday, with a significant portion (over 60%) reviewing content between patient visits.

Importantly, the majority of physicians surveyed report they spend 30 minutes or less reviewing medical news or educational information during the average workday, with a notable portion (41%) spending 15 minutes or less. These data suggest that busy physicians could benefit from brief yet impactful information that can be easily digested throughout the workday.

**Amount of Time Physicians Spend Reviewing Medical News or Educational Information During the Average Workday**



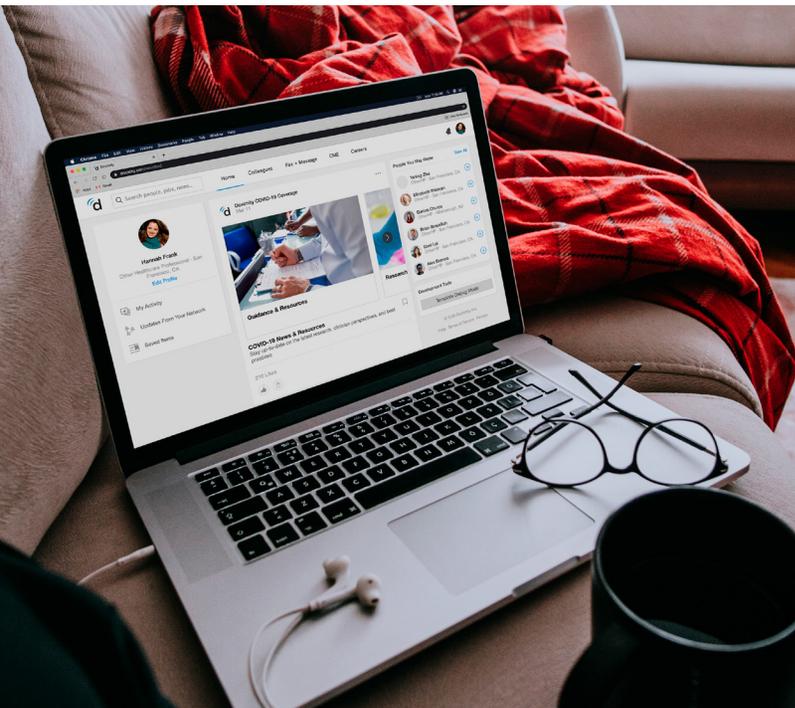
**How Often Physicians Review Medical News or Educational Information Between Patient Visits**



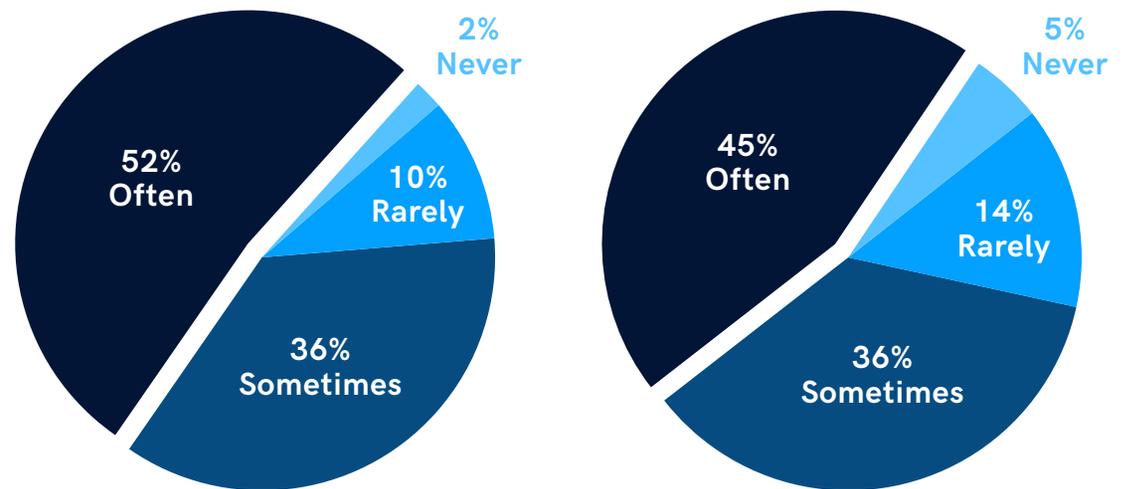
## Physician Learning Habits During Free Time

Even though many physicians are reviewing medical news and educational information during the workday, **over 65% report they do not have adequate time in their clinical schedules to learn about new research, clinical trials, products, treatments or procedures.** As a result, physicians often work longer hours or give up their free time outside of work to further their medical knowledge. This includes reviewing medical news and educational information after their workday and on their days off.

As mentioned in a recent U.S. Surgeon General advisory,<sup>4</sup> up to 54% of U.S. nurses and physicians were already experiencing burnout before the pandemic.<sup>5</sup> In a 2021 survey of over 2,000 U.S. physicians on Doximity, nearly three-quarters of physicians reported being overworked, with half of physicians considering an employment change.<sup>6</sup> Taken together, these findings suggest a need for solutions that can help physicians stay up to date, while also supporting their need for a more sustainable workload and work-life balance.



How Often Physicians Review Medical News or Educational Information:  
After Their Workday      On Their Days Off



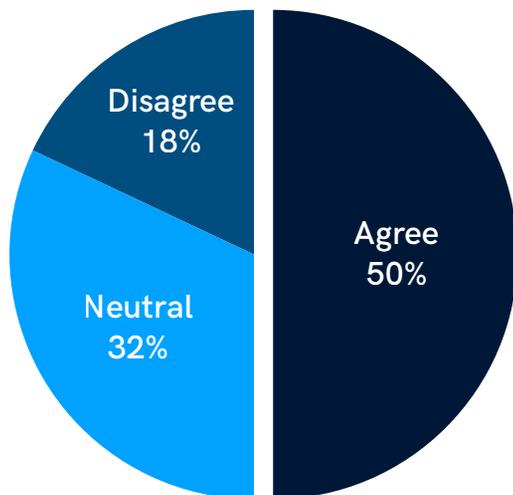
## Physician Preferences for Relevance and Specificity

The amount of information physicians have to keep up with is expanding at an unprecedented rate. It is estimated that in 1950 it took about 50 years for medical knowledge to double. By 2010, medical knowledge was doubling at an estimated rate of every 3.5 years, and this trend is expected to continue.<sup>7</sup>

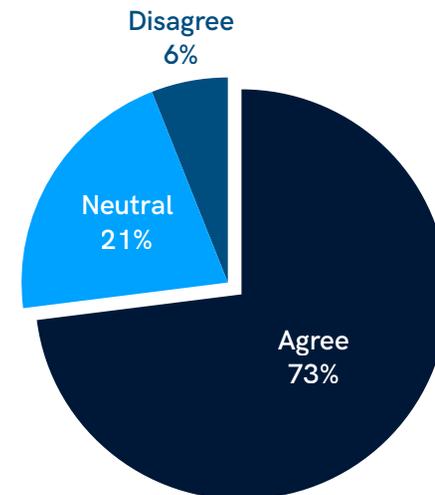
With no possible way to keep up, it's no surprise that **half of physicians surveyed report feeling frustrated when they receive medical news or educational information that is irrelevant or not specific to their individual practice.** To ensure medical knowledge is effectively consumed and applied, these findings suggest physicians could benefit from more personalized content that is relevant and specific to their area of medicine.

Physician interest in relevance and specificity also extends, for many physicians, to their patient populations and practice locations. Over 70% of physicians surveyed, including over 80% of oncologists, report they would like information on clinical trials, treatments and procedures to **more accurately** reflect the diversity of their patients. Furthermore, over 60% of physicians report interest in geographically-specific information, such as local educational events and clinical trial location sites.

"I feel frustrated when I receive medical news or educational information that is irrelevant or not specific to my practice."



"I would like information on clinical trials, treatments and procedures to more accurately reflect the diversity of my patients."



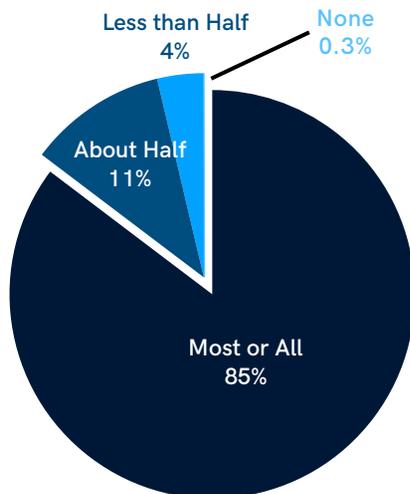
# Physician Preferences for Online and Mobile Content

With busy clinical schedules and an abundance of information to keep up with, the importance of digital, mobile-friendly content continues to grow among physicians.

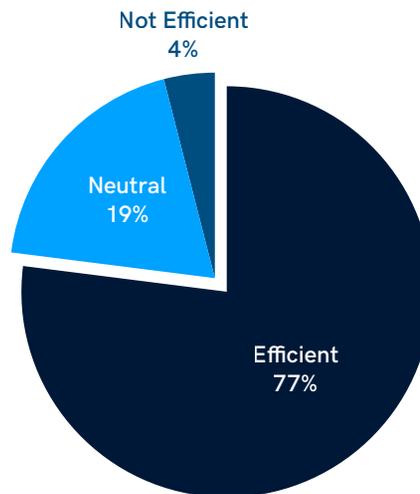
*85% of physicians surveyed report conducting "most" or "all" of their engagement with medical news or educational information online, including via a smartphone*

The majority of physicians surveyed (over 77%) also believe content optimized for mobile devices is efficient, while only about 38% of physicians believe the same is true for content optimized for desktop computers. These findings are consistent with Doximity usage data, showing that in the past 12 months (September 2021 to September 2022), 83% of physician engagement on its newsfeed was conducted using a mobile device.

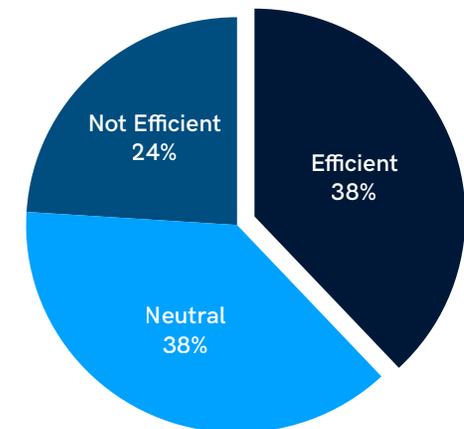
**Portion of Engagement with Medical News or Educational Information Conducted Online**



**Efficiency of Content Optimized for Mobile**



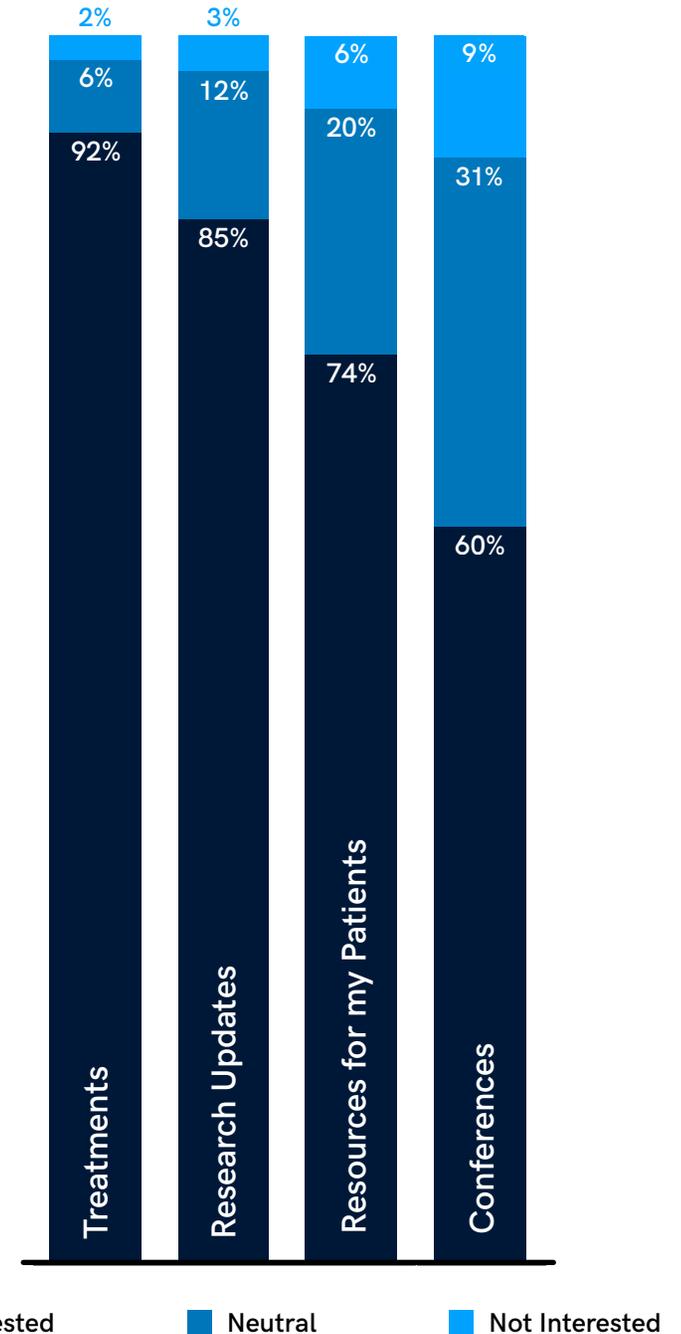
**Efficiency of Content Optimized for Desktop**



## Preferred Topics for Online Learning

Survey findings suggest physicians are interested in learning about a range of medical news and educational information online. **Over 90% of physicians surveyed report an interest in learning about medical treatments online, while nearly 85% report a similar interest in research updates.**

When learning about a new treatment, two-thirds of physicians (66%) surveyed report an interest in learning about insurance coverage, and approximately 95% report interest in reviewing clinical guidelines. Patient resources are also of high interest, with nearly three out of four physicians reporting interest.



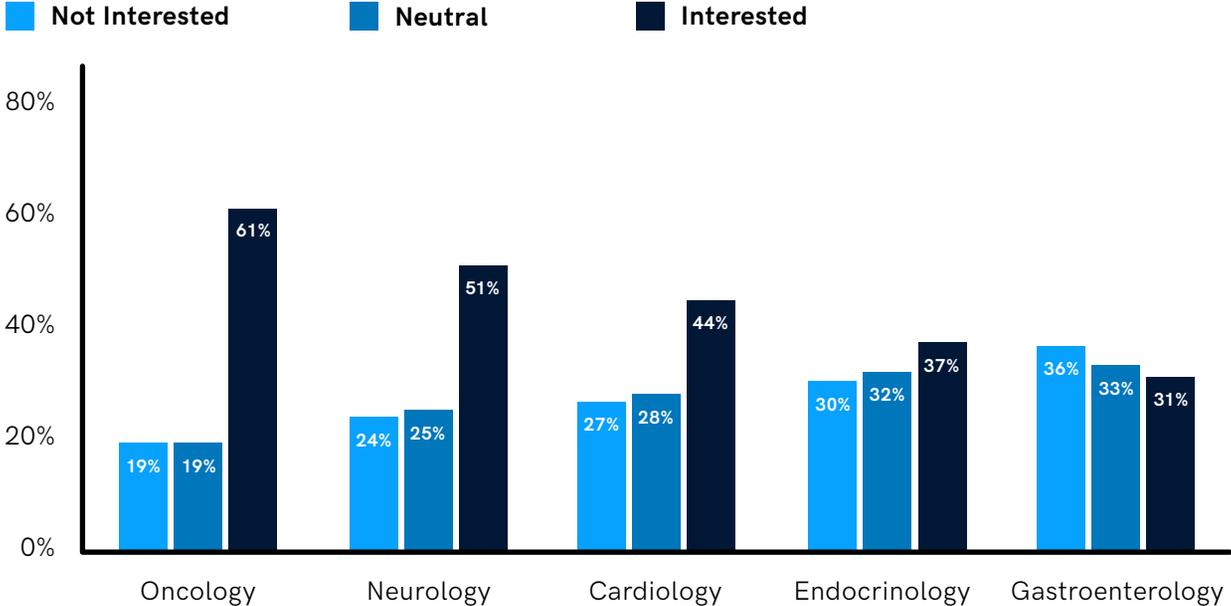


## Physician Interest in Clinical Trial Recruitment

While interest in learning about treatments and research updates online was significant across all five specialties surveyed, interest in clinical trial recruitment varied more by specialty. Oncologists had the greatest interest in learning about clinical trials online, with 61% reporting this information is important to them.

Today, oncology is one of the fastest growing areas of therapy development. According to a recent study, from 2000 to 2020, the number of investigational treatments targeting cancer nearly quadrupled.<sup>8</sup> Still, identifying and enrolling patients remains a challenge. Oncology trials are increasingly complex and often require more investigational sites across more countries. Ensuring oncologists have timely and relevant information about these trials is critical to promoting patient access.

Physician Interest in Clinical Trial Recruitment by Specialty



## Content Channel and Source Preferences

In addition to conducting most of their engagement with medical news and educational information online, physicians also appear to have strong preferences for how this information is delivered.

A significant proportion of physicians surveyed report they prefer to learn about the latest research, clinical trials, treatments and/or procedures from other qualified members of the medical community, including directly from peers and colleagues, experts and industry thought leaders, and online platforms/tools for doctors.

Survey results also suggest a clear sentiment that consumer-facing, public social media platforms (i.e. those not specific to the medical community) are not a preferred place for this type of engagement.

### Physician Channel and Source Preferences When Learning About the Latest Research, Clinical Trials, Treatments and/or Procedures

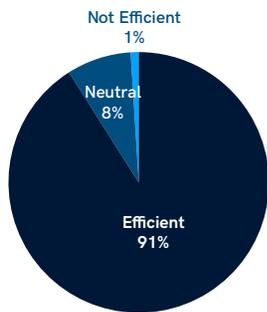
Channel/Source	% Interest
Online Platforms/Tools for Doctors	63%
Professional Webinars, Conferences or Events	63%
Directly from Thought Leaders or Experts	62%
Directly from Personal Peers or Colleagues	46%
Public Social Media Platforms	12%



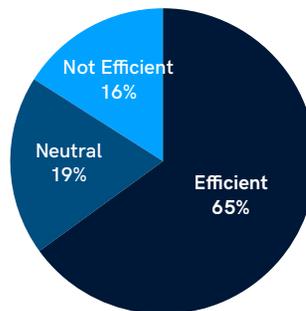
## Physician Preferences for Brevity

Without enough time in the workday to adequately review medical news and educational information, it appears brevity is key to efficiency. As survey results demonstrate, physicians believe shorter form content focused on key information is more efficient than longer form content. These findings suggest a focus on brevity could help promote greater physician productivity and potentially faster application to clinical practice.

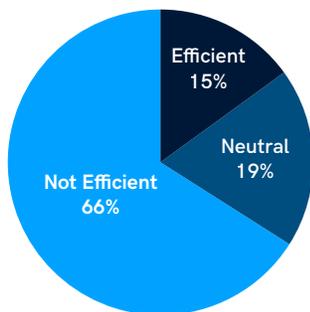
### Efficiency of Short-Form Articles



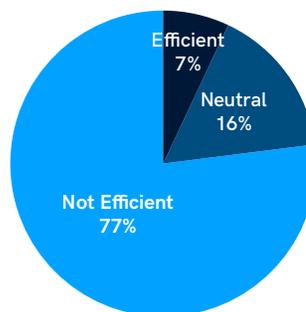
### Efficiency of Short-Form Videos



### Efficiency of Long-Form Articles



### Efficiency of Long-Form Videos



In the survey, physicians were

**8x**

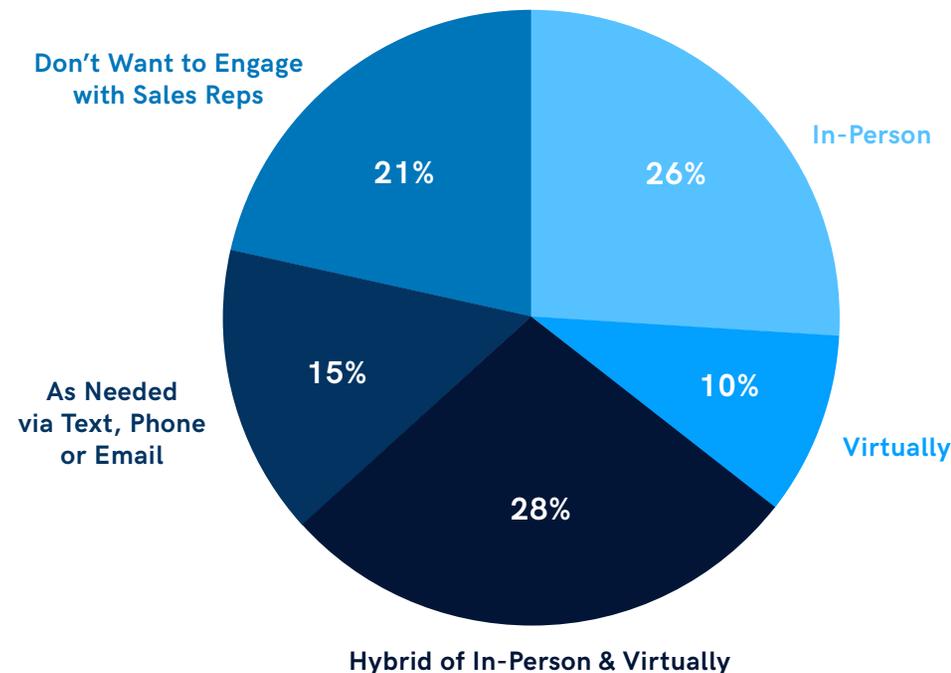
more likely to rate short videos  
efficient compared to long videos  
(65% vs. 7%)

## Attitudes About Engaging with Industry Sales Representatives

While the pandemic presented numerous challenges to the healthcare community, it also opened the door to new technologies, healthcare delivery models, and hybrid work schedules. In alignment with this hybrid theme, nearly three in four physicians surveyed (74%) report they either prefer to engage with industry sales representatives outside of the traditional in-person model (i.e. virtually; a hybrid of in-person and virtually; or as-needed via phone, email or text), or don't want to engage with them at all.

This trend is even more pronounced among oncologists, neurologists and women physicians, with over 80% of physicians in each group reporting they prefer alternative options to traditional in-person meetings. These findings suggest physicians could benefit from more flexible meeting modalities that allow them to better control their busy schedules and prioritize patient care.

### Physician Preferences for Engagement with Sales Representatives



### Physician Preferences by Gender for Meeting with Sales Representatives

Meeting Option	Women % Interest	Men % Interest
In-Person	16%	32%
Virtually	12%	8%
Hybrid of In-Person & Virtually	26%	29%
As Needed Via Text, Phone or Email	19%	13%
Don't Want to Engage With Sales Representatives	27%	18%

## Noteworthy Trends in Oncology

*Among specialties surveyed, oncologists are most likely to report feeling overwhelmed and needing to sacrifice free time to further their knowledge.*

While the overall cancer death rate in the U.S. has declined since the early 1990s, it appears keeping up with the latest research and information to fight cancer is taking a considerable toll on oncologists.<sup>9</sup> Compared to other specialties surveyed, a greater proportion of oncologists (80% vs. 68% of all physicians surveyed) report feeling overwhelmed by the amount of new research, clinical trials, products, treatments or procedures to keep up with. They also report sacrificing their free time to further their knowledge most often.

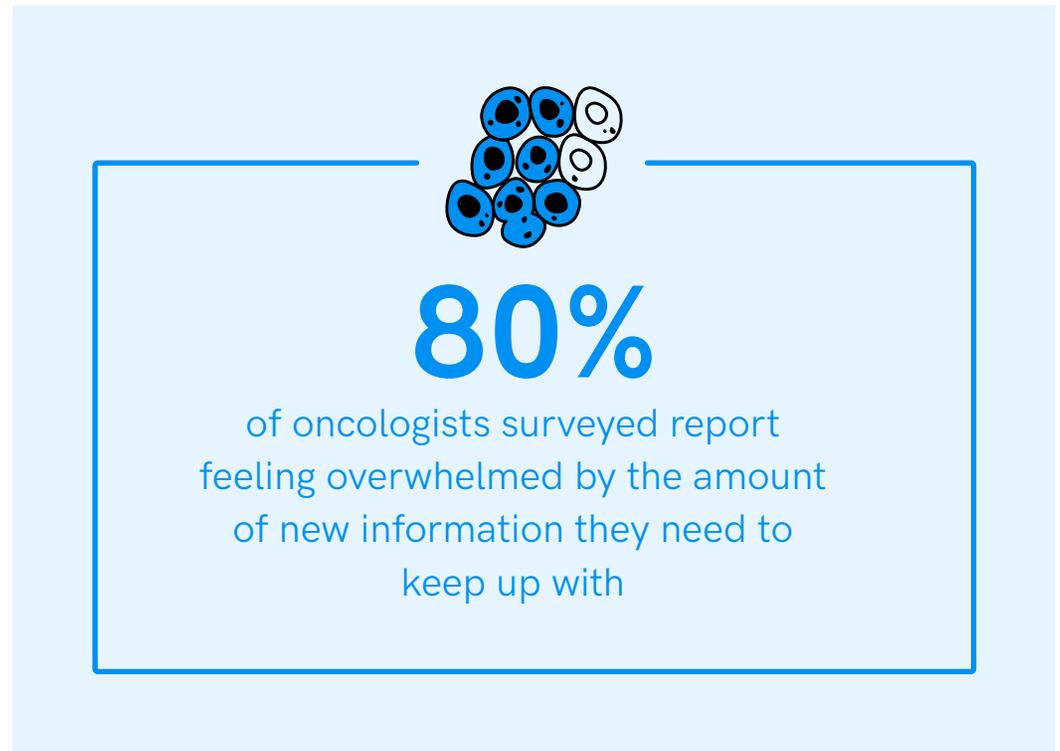
*Nearly two-thirds of oncologists (65%) often review medical news or educational information after their workday.*

This is despite the fact that oncologists appear to be spending more time reviewing medical news and educational information during the workday, with over one in three oncologists (38%) spending more than 30 minutes and sometimes over an hour reviewing this information during the average workday.

### How Often Physicians Review Medical News or Educational Information After Their Workday by Specialty

Specialty	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Oncology	65%	26%	8%	1%
Endocrinology	53%	35%	10%	2%
Neurology	48%	44%	8%	1%
Cardiology	46%	40%	10%	3%
Gastroenterology	41%	38%	17%	4%

\*Due to rounding numbers, may not sum to 100%





## Conclusion

While the acceleration of medical research and innovation is poised to transform patient care, ensuring this knowledge makes it from bench to bedside in a comprehensive, clinically useful way is no easy feat. With this acceleration comes a tidal wave of medical news and information that no single physician can possibly keep up with. As a result, information overload is overwhelming an already stretched physician workforce.

These report findings suggest a continued need for more effective content and physician engagement strategies that recognize just how busy physicians are. By prioritizing brevity and specificity, we can help physicians eliminate the noise, and most importantly, spend more time caring for their patients.

# Methodology

Doximity surveyed a total of 602 physicians across five specialties (oncology, cardiology, endocrinology, neurology, and gastroenterology) during the months of August and September 2022.

The results shared in this report are inclusive of all responses unless otherwise specified. Survey respondents by specialty, age and gender can be viewed below.

**Total respondents:** 602

**Respondents by specialty:**

- Oncologists: 113
- Cardiologists: 99
- Endocrinologists: 161
- Neurologists: 119
- Gastroenterologists: 110

**Respondents by gender:**

- Women: 226
- Men: 375
- Non-Binary: 1

**Respondents by age:**

- Under 40: 278
- 40-60: 211
- 60+: 113

## Sources

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- [5] Taking Action Against Clinician Burnout: A Systems Approach to Professional Well-Being. National Academy of Medicine. Accessed October 2022 at <https://nam.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CR-report-highlights-brief-final.pdf>.
- [6] 2021 Doximity Physician Compensation Report. <https://c8y.doxcdn.com/image/upload/v1/Press%20Blog/Research%20Reports/Doximity-Compensation-Report-2021.pdf>.
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- [8] Protocol Complexity and Patient Enrollment Intensify Challenges in Oncology Clinical Trials. Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development. Accessed October 2022 at <https://www.globenewswire.com/en/news-release/2021/05/04/2222347/0/en/Protocol-Complexity-and-Patient-Enrollment-Intensify-Challenges-in-Oncology-Clinical-Trials-According-to-Tufts-Center-for-the-Study-of-Drug-Development.html>.
- [9] NIH cancer statistics. Accessed October 2022 at <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/statistics>.

## About Doximity

Founded in 2010, Doximity is the leading digital platform for U.S. medical professionals. The company's network members include over 80% of U.S. physicians across all specialties and practice areas. Doximity provides its verified clinical membership with digital tools built for medicine, enabling them to collaborate with colleagues, stay up to date with the latest medical news and research, manage their careers and on-call schedules, and conduct virtual patient visits. Doximity's mission is to help doctors be more productive so they can provide better care for their patients.

To learn more, visit [www.doximity.com](http://www.doximity.com).

