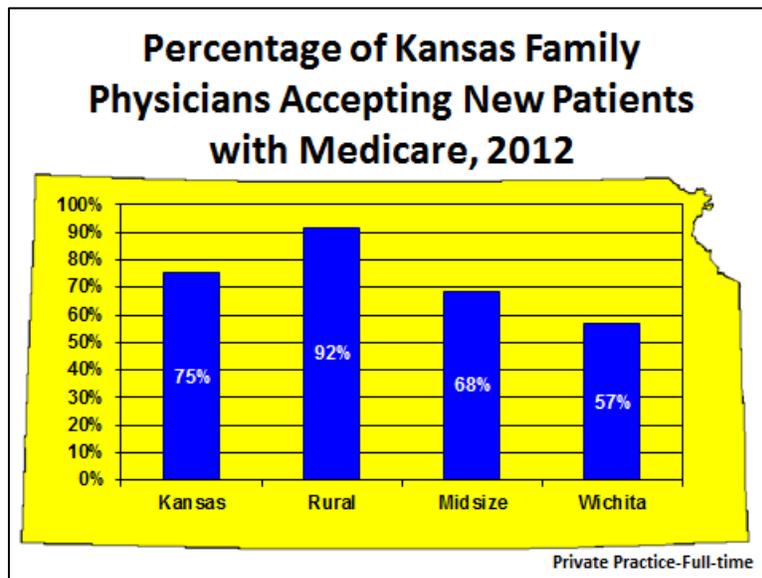


Percentage of Kansas Family Physicians Accepting New Patients with Medicare

Over the last decade, physicians across the country have threatened to stop accepting new Medicare patients into their practices if the United States Congress did not fix the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula that is used to set Medicare payment rates. In 2011, 17% of office-based physicians from the 2011 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey Electronic Medical Records Supplement said they were unwilling to accept any new Medicare patients.¹ The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) reported that in 2012, 91% of office-based physicians were accepting new Medicare patients and 87% of AAFP members were doing so.² Urban family physicians accepted new Medicare patients at a lower rate (70%) than did rural family physicians (83%).³

In 2012, a survey of practicing family physicians in Kansas indicated community variations in the percentage who were taking new Medicare patients into their practices. Just over 50% of family physicians in full-time private practice in Wichita indicate they are taking new patients with Medicare into their practices. Higher percentages of Wichita physicians who work in community health centers and teach in residency programs, accept new patients with Medicare. There are anecdotal stories of patients with Medicare who have recently moved to Wichita complaining they have had trouble finding a physician who would see them. Family physicians in rural and mid-sized Kansas communities are less likely to close their practices to new patients with Medicare.



There are a number of reasons a physician practice may not accept new Medicare patients. The practice may have an existing oversupply of patients. A physician may restrict her practice based on focus (e.g. occupational medicine, cosmetic medicine) or payment (e.g. concierge or boutique practice). Low reimbursement rates may result in a physician restricting his practice to patients with commercial insurance. Whatever the reason, access to care may suffer and health care costs may increase when family physicians do not accept new patients with Medicare.

1. Decker SL. In 2011 nearly one-third of physicians said they would not accept new Medicaid patients, but rising fees may help. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2012 Aug;31(8):1673-9.
2. Physicians Sticking With Medicare ... for Now, http://blogs.aafp.org/cfr/leadervoices/entry/physicians_sticking_with_medicare_for, accessed 11/26/2103.
3. MacKinney AC, Xu L, Mueller KJ. Medicare beneficiary access to primary care physicians--better in rural, but still worrisome. *Rural Policy Brief*. 2011 Jan;(2011 1):1-4.