

Information Seeking Patterns of Physicians: Findings from a Large National Study

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Background

- In a complex and time pressured healthcare environment, physicians are constantly receiving and searching for information and educational opportunities.^{1,2}
- Traditional forms of education (e.g. lecture-based activities) have been shown to be inadequate to changing behavior.³
- Understanding learning styles and information seeking patterns of physicians is essential to designing more effective programs and instruction that may enhance behavior change.

Purpose of Study

- To understand the variability among different physician specialties with regard to preferences to receiving information, processing information, and their motivation to seek medical information.
- To establish the relationship between physician information seeking behaviors and the design of educational programs.

Understanding learning styles and information seeking patterns of physicians is essential to designing more effective programs.

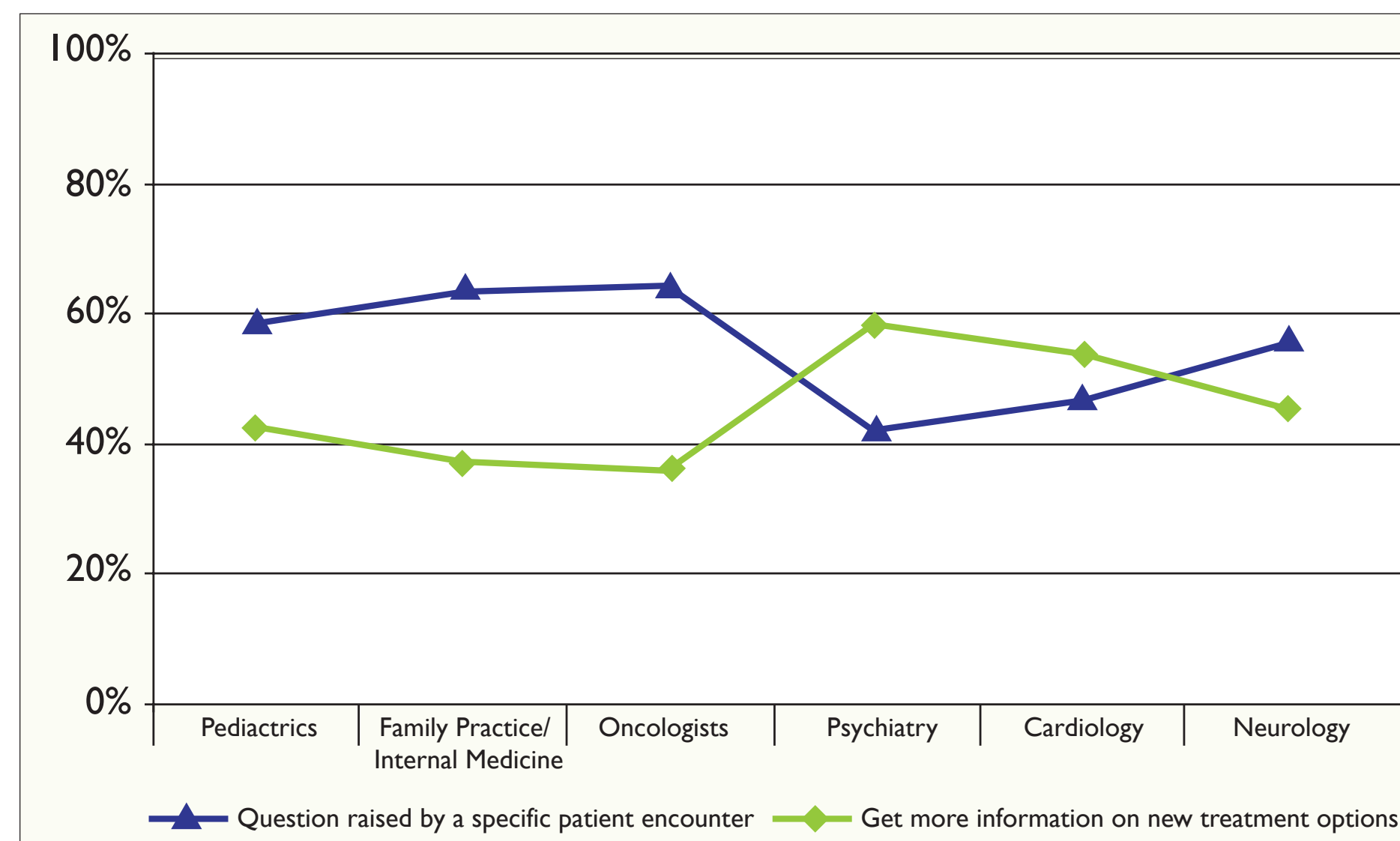
Methodology

- A survey instrument was created to assess learning styles and information seeking patterns of physicians across a variety of specialties based on the Felder-Silverman and VARK learning style models.^{4,5}
- The survey instrument was distributed between Fall 2007-Spring 2008 to random samples of physicians in 6 identified specialties.
- A total of 1,338 responses were collected for analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

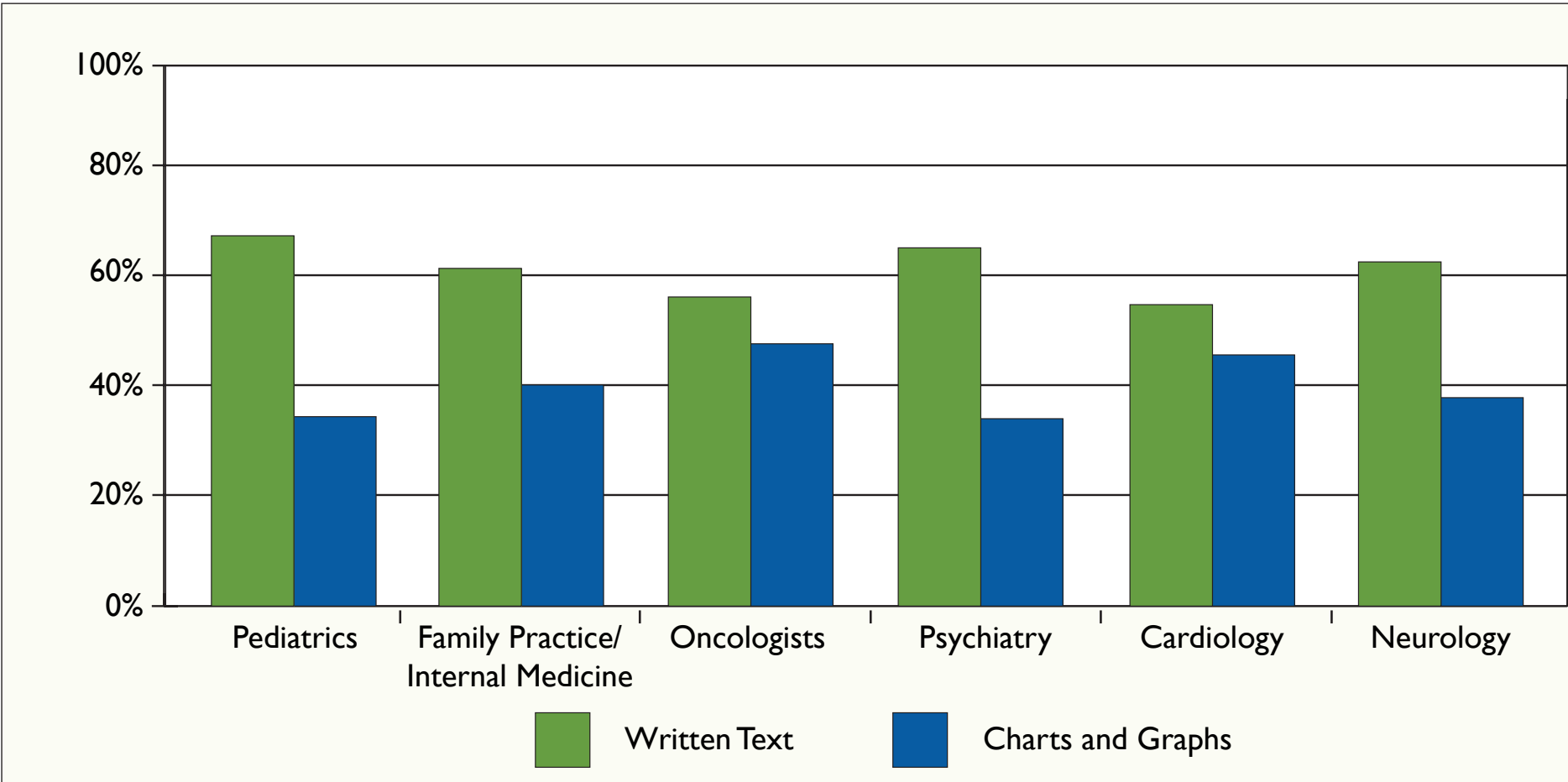
	Pediatrics (n=188)	Family Practice/Internal Medicine (n=272)	Oncologists (n=192)	Psychiatry (n=127)	Cardiology (n=134)	Neurology (n=425)
Patients Seen per Week: mean (SD)	106 (42)	103 (30)	87 (56)	68 (49)	93 (33)	72 (56)
Years in Practice: mean (SD)	19.9 (10.5)	16.0 (8.2)	14.3 (9.8)	23.3 (10.8)	18.3 (7.5)	15.9 (10.6)
Hours per Week Spent Searching Online: mean (SD)	2.9 (4.2)	4.1 (6.2)	5.4 (5.8)	2.4 (3.0)	4.5 (8.5)	5.0 (6.3)

Motivation to Seek Information

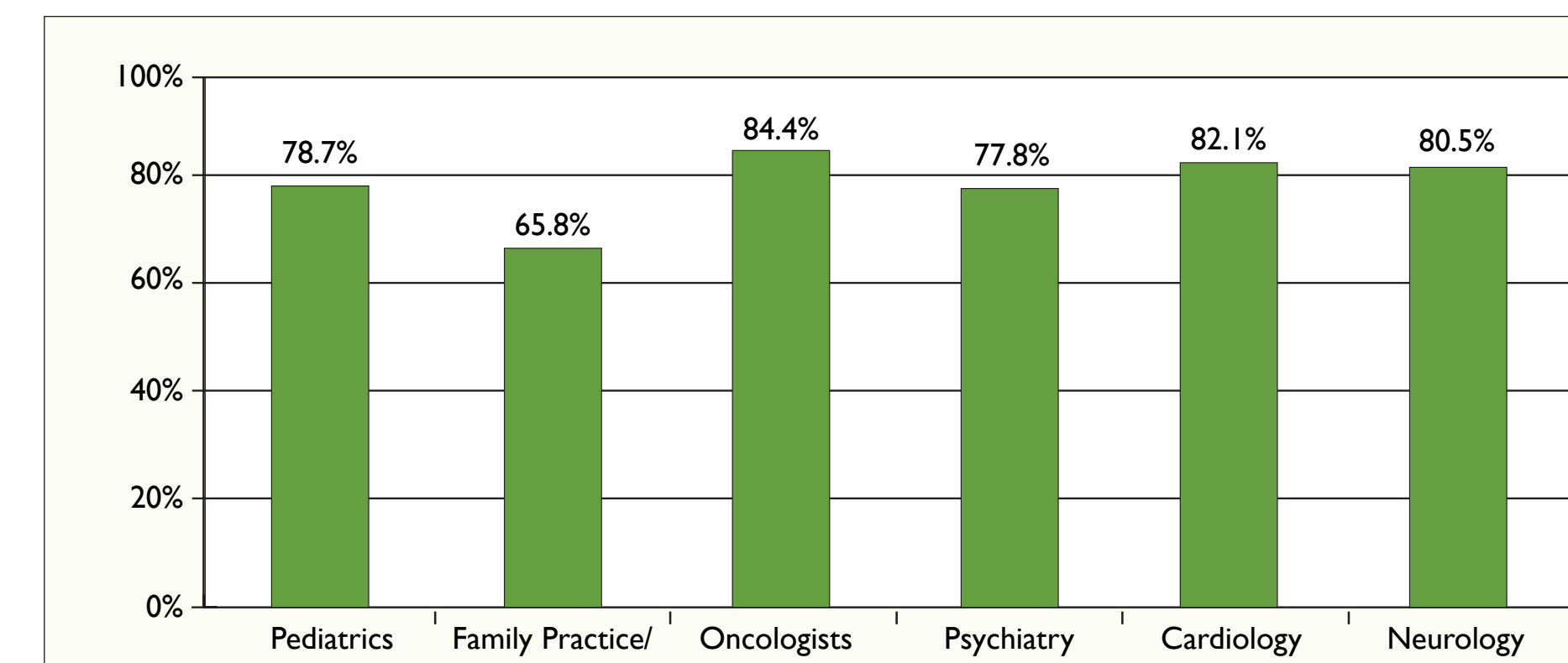


Considerable variability exists among different specialties in terms of learning styles and preferences.

Approach to Assimilating New Medical Information Encountered in CME



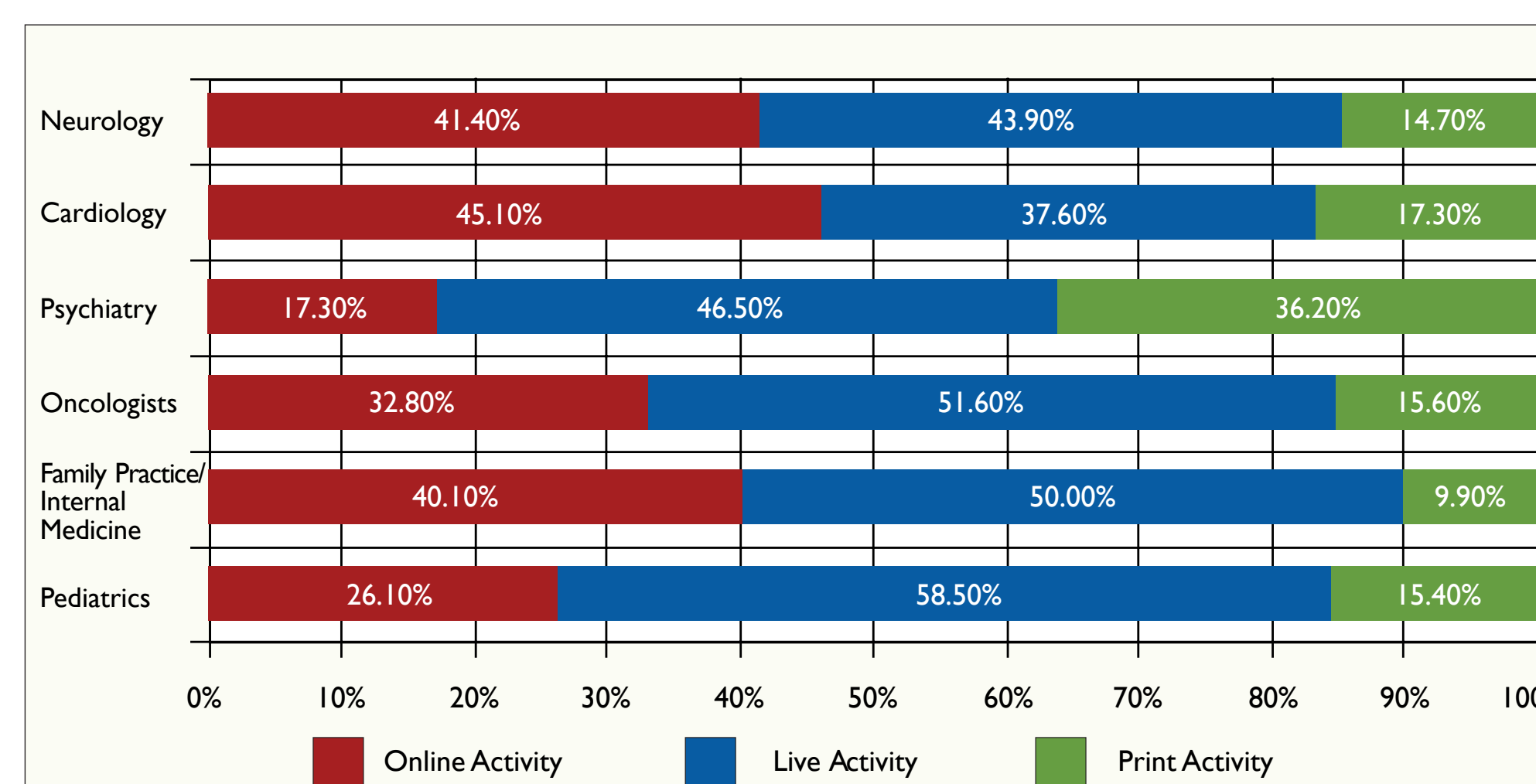
Percent Who Rely on Recommendations from Nationally Recognized Experts Before Trying Something New



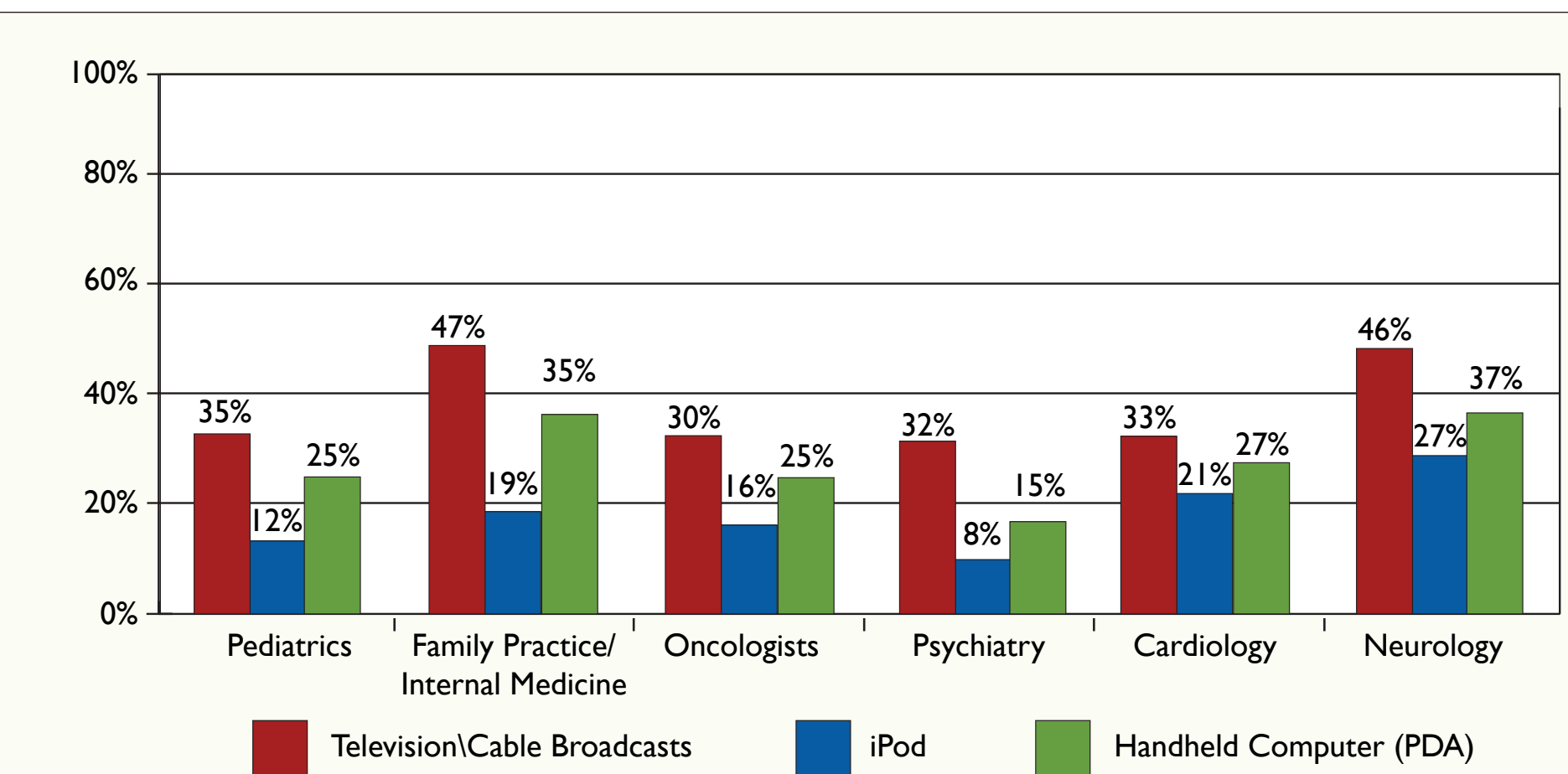
Importance in Deciding to Participate in CME

	Pediatrics (n=188)	Family Practice/Internal Medicine (n=272)	Oncologists (n=192)	Psychiatry (n=127)	Cardiology (n=134)	Neurology (n=425)
Topic (%)	100	97	98	96	99	98
Faculty (%)	65	43	73	67	76	67
On-Demand Access (%)	56	52	43	44	49	60
Location (%)	86	83	58	84	68	70

Preferred Education Delivery Method



Likelihood of Participating in CME Formats



Conclusions

- Considerable variability exists among different specialties in terms of learning styles and preferences
- Educational activities that include the following elements may engage learners more effectively:
 - Searchable
 - Problem based (addressing patient questions)
 - Relevant to practice
 - On-demand
 - Expert driven
- CME providers should develop programs that allow tailoring of education by learning style and format to fit educational gaps

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