PATIENT INSiGHT
INSTITUTE

Navigating Administrative Tasks

Understanding Their Impact on Patients and Caregivers

*Results of a survey by PAF's Patient Insight Institute*

Navigating Administrative Tasks
Understanding Their Impact on Patients and Caregivers

Administrative tasks play a large factor in an individual's medical journey. Common tasks, such as appointment scheduling, gathering information from an insurance provider, obtaining prior authorizations for medications and procedures, and resolving premium and billing issues, are non-financial costs that require time and effort to be able to pay and obtain care in the United States[1]. These non-financial costs can contribute to why patients are delaying or avoiding care all together.

"[I've] been trying to get an MRI of my brain that was supposed to be done five years ago as a follow up for brain condition. I have had so many problems trying to get it even though doctors requested it. Insurance keeps denying it."

Figure 1. Types of Administrative Tasks in the Past 12 Months
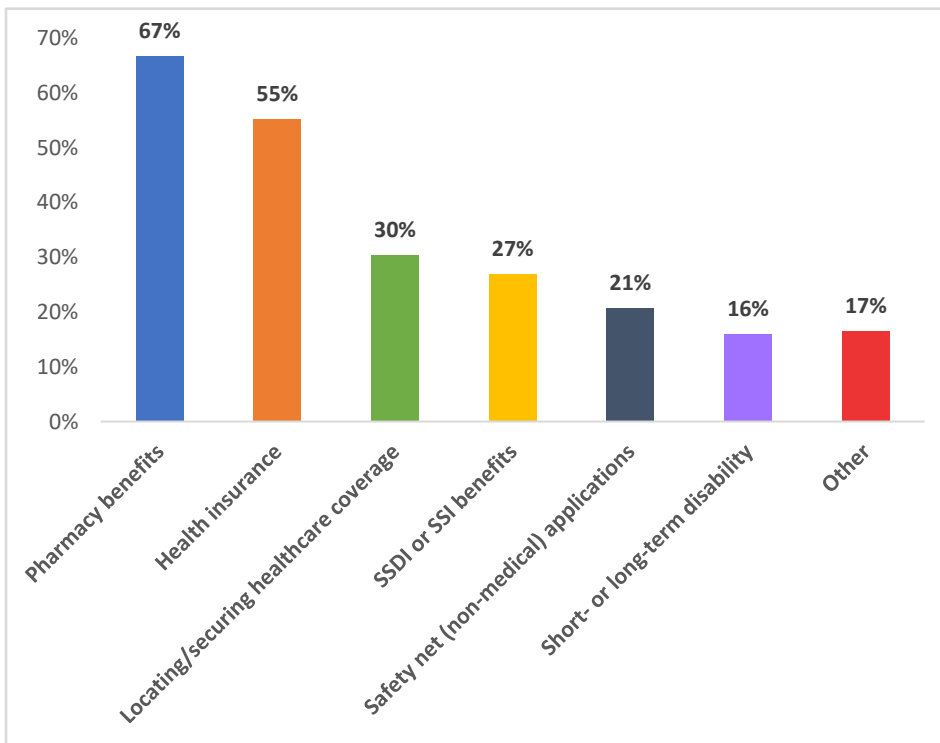
Of the participants surveyed (n=934), 64% stated that they or someone they provide care for experienced administrative burden resulting from a medical diagnosis in the past 12 months.

Health insurance (55%) and pharmacy benefits (67%) selected as the tasks that many respondents spent time on in the last twelve months (Figure 1). For respondents that selected "Other" (17%), they spent time with administrative tasks such as securing financial assistance and paperwork for medical and non-medical needs (Figure 2).
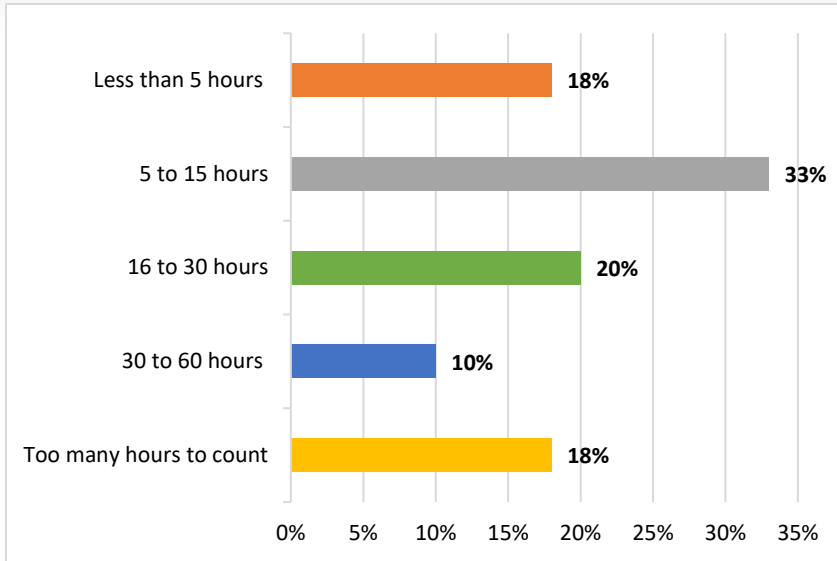
Figure 2. Administrative Tasks in Past 12 Months

More than three quarters of patients and caregivers (81%) reported spending five or more hours on administrative tasks in the past twelve months with 18% percent of those reporting that they spent "too many hours to count".

"So much typing, writing, printing, calling, faxing and emails. It's a huge amount of work to track everything down, fill everything out, coordinate between providers and insurance, get a straight answer from anyone, and then schedule it all and take notes. It's exhausting and that's on top of already being sick, injured or disabled. It's almost 2024 and we have computers and automation, yet the medical field is run in a very disorganized and archaic way that feels patched together haphazardly, in inefficient and confusing ways."

Administrative burden not only impacts disease progression, but also increases anxiety among patients and caregivers[2]. The resulting disruption can cause patients to delay needed care or avoid seeking treatment permanently. Over 50% of participants were unable to fully complete their administrative tasks (n=324), however almost half (n =244; 47%) indicated the ability to at least complete some part of the process. Although many healthcare systems have staff in place to assist with administrative tasks over half (61%) of patients and caregivers reported not receiving assistance from a healthcare social worker, advocate, navigator, case manager or other professional in the past 12 months.

Figure 3. Time Spent on Administrative Tasks in Past 12 Months

| Category	Percentage
Less than 5 hours	18%
5 to 15 hours	33%
16 to 30 hours	20%
30 to 60 hours	10%
Too many hours to count	18%

When asked why they were unable to complete administrative tasks, patients and caregivers provided a variety of medical (30%) and non-medical reasons (56%), with 14% providing both medical and non-medical reasons (Figure 3). For many respondents, they listed issues with insurance and their specific medical condition as to why they were unable to complete administrative tasks. Often, patients experienced issues with incorrect or miscommunicated information from insurance providers and their directories.

These insurance issues not only affect patients, but also how administrative tasks can hinder the ability of physicians and other providers to be able to provide the proper care, calling for the need of payers and governmental agencies to access administrative requirements to see if they need to be revised or eliminated[3].

"After exhausting all the phone numbers, emails, websites, agencies and so forth, one realizes, the point is for you to give up and go away or die. Unless you're wealthy"

Figure 4. Reasons for Not Completing Administrative Tasks

Medical, 30%
Non-Medical, 54%
Both, 15%
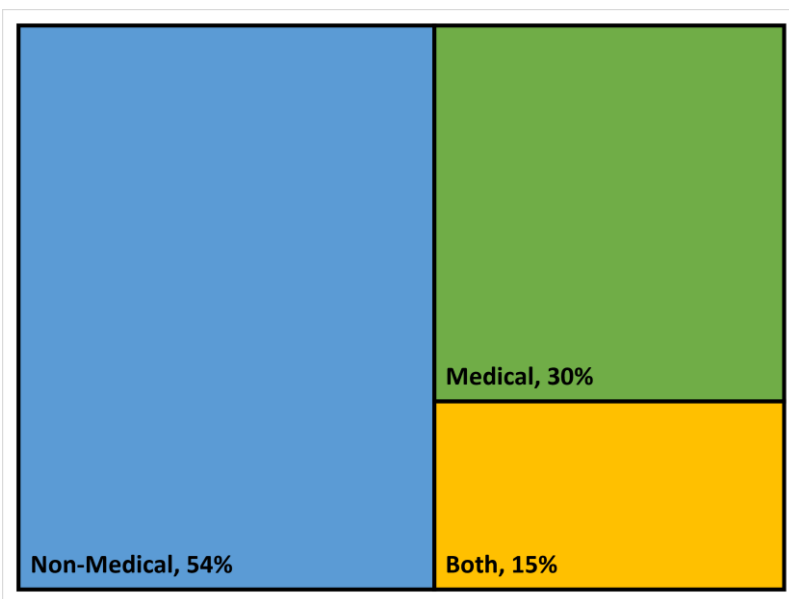
The top three reasons for not completing administrative tasks included (1) the amount of time it takes to complete a task, which could sometimes take months to complete, (2) prior authorizations for medications, procedures, or (3) documentation to receive outside funding (Figure 4; See Appendix 1 for subcategories). Not surprisingly, these results fall in line with survey results from the American Medical Association conducted in 2020 s where 86% of respondents stated that administrative burden for prior authorizations was "high or extremely high"[4].

> *"It became so complex and confusing for my mental health's sake; I just gave up."*

Patients and caregivers also indicated that the overwhelming amount of paperwork contributed to why they were unable to complete a task. In addition, paperwork was confusing leading to incomplete tasks, which caused them to delay or avoid the care they were seeking.

The detrimental impact of administrative tasks on healthcare access cannot be overstated. These burdensome processes often lead to delays or avoidance of care, particularly among marginalized communities facing healthcare disparities. By implementing measures to clarify paperwork requirements, streamline administrative procedures and alleviate the associated burden, patients and caregivers can be empowered to acquire care without hesitation. Secondly, policies and procedures must be tailored to be easily understandable and accessible to the general population, ensuring that healthcare remains equitable and inclusive. Finally, healthcare providers can play a pivotal role in educating patients about available resources to mitigate administrative burdens, fostering a more supportive and informed healthcare environment for all.
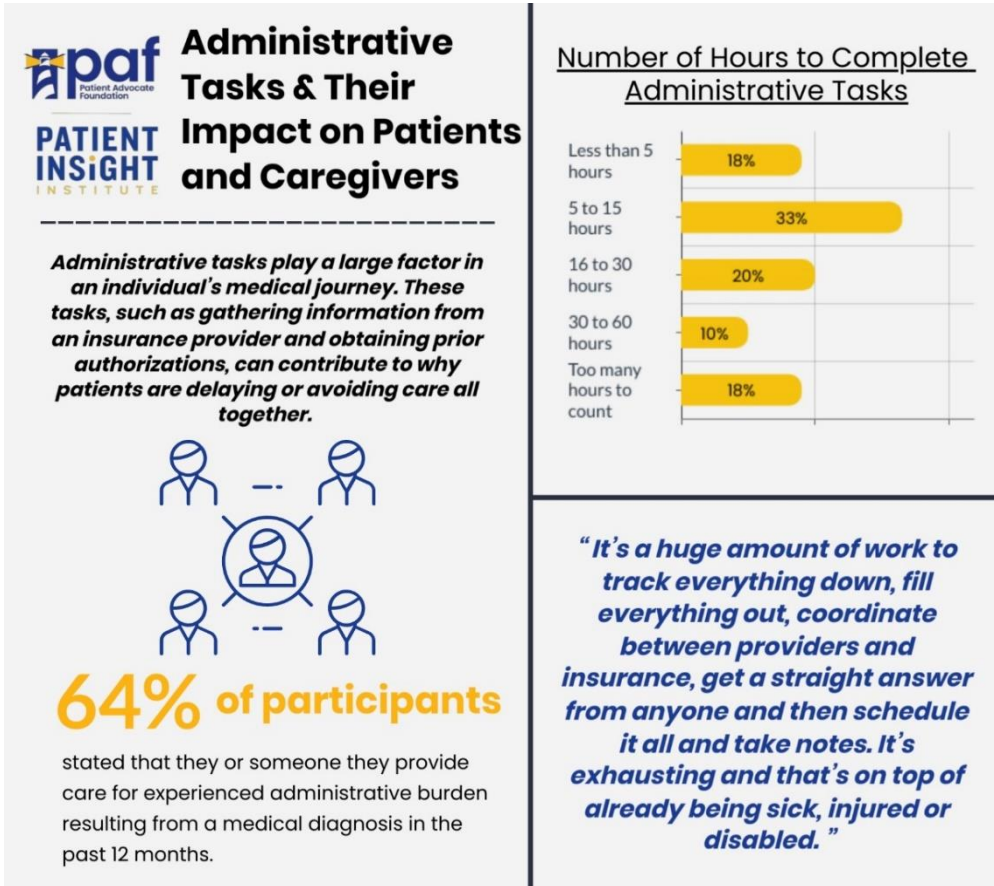
> *"I need all sorts of assessments for SSDI, but the catch is 95% of the doctors and specialists listed as taking Medicaid do not take Medicaid., so I can't find anyone to do the assessments."*

Reasons for Not Completing Administrative Tasks*	
Medical	Non-Medical
Insurance Issues (67%)	Lack of Financial Assistance (23%)
Medical Condition (23%)	Time (19%)
Medication Issues (7%)	Lack of Communication (11%)
Issues Finding Care (3%)	Confusing Administrative Tasks (11%)
Issues with Referrals (2%)	Amount of Paperwork/Forms (11%)
	Too many administrative tasks (7%)
	Complication of Tasks (5%)
	Lack of assistance (4%)
	Issues with billing (4%)
	"Red Tape" (2%)
	Lack of information (2%)
	Lack of Internet Access (1%)
	Language (1%)

*Primary concern was used when calculating percentages

Appendix 2

Administrative Tasks & Their Impact on Patients and Caregivers

Administrative tasks play a large factor in an individual's medical journey. These tasks, such as gathering information from an insurance provider and obtaining prior authorizations, can contribute to why patients are delaying or avoiding care all together.

64% of participants stated that they or someone they provide care for experienced administrative burden resulting from a medical diagnosis in the past 12 months.

Number of Hours to Complete Administrative Tasks

Less than 5 hours	18%
5 to 15 hours	33%
16 to 30 hours	20%
30 to 60 hours	10%
Too many hours to count	18%

" It's a huge amount of work to track everything down, fill everything out, coordinate between providers and insurance, get a straight answer from anyone and then schedule it all and take notes. It's exhausting and that's on top of already being sick, injured or disabled. "

Sources

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