DOES TIME SPENT WITH THE PHYSICIAN AFFECT INPATIENT SATISFACTION?  NS Becker, JL Bowerman, AR Hoellein, CA Feddock, JF Wilson, TS Caudill, CH Griffith, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to determine if the time spent in direct contact with the resident-physicians was reflected by their inpatients’ satisfaction with the care received.

**Methods:** Over a summer period, a convenience sample of inpatients on the internal medicine services at both the University and Veterans Affairs hospitals were surveyed by written questionnaire. The patients were asked to estimate the length of time spent with them by their doctor that day, if they were pleased with their doctor, whether they would recommend their doctor to friends and family, and overall satisfaction with the care received. Estimated time spent with doctor was categorized into 0-5, 5-15, 15-30, and over 30 minutes. Patient ratings for “I am pleased with my doctor”, “I would recommend my doctor to friends and family”, and “I was satisfied with my visit” were assessed on a 10-point, Likert-type scale. Pearson correlation matrices and multiple regression approaches were used to assess the association of these patient satisfaction domains with the time spent with the physician.

**Results:** Three hundred and eight patient surveys were analyzed in this study. Generally, and similar to other studies, patients were pleased with their doctor (8.7 ± 1.4), would recommend their doctor to family and friends (8.8 ± 1.7), and satisfied with their care (8.9 ± 1.3). Time spent with the patient was an independent predictor of patient satisfaction [F(3,304)=14.3, p<.001]. Overall patient satisfaction was significantly less when the physician spent 0-5 minutes with them (7.8 ± 1.9) than 5-15 minutes (8.9 ± 1.3) (p<.05), and further improved when they spent 15-30 minutes with them (9.3 ± 1.3) (p<.05). There was a plateau effect observed as 30 or more minutes spent with the patient did not supplement their satisfaction (9.2 ± .8). Patient ratings of being pleased with their doctor and willing to recommend the physician to family and friends were similarly reduced if the physician spent 0-5 minutes (7.7 ± 2.0 and 7.1 ± 2.7), improved for 5-15 minutes (8.8 ± 1.2 and 8.9 ± 1.5), peaked for 15-30 minutes (9.2 ± 1.4 and 9.4 ± 1.3), and exhibited similar plateau effects for over 30 minutes (9.1 ± .9 and 9.5 ± .8) (p<.05).

**Conclusions:** Patients’ perception of time spent with their resident-physician in the hospital is an important component of patient satisfaction, being pleased with the physician, and whether they would recommend the doctor to family and friends or not. Merely spending a few more minutes with the patient can increase a patient’s satisfaction and may improve overall patient care.