

Incentives and survey length:

Does offering a choice result in higher response rates?

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Overview

- **To support the evaluation of the Comprehensive Primary Care Plus model, we fielded a medical practice-level web survey.**
 - **Goal of survey:**
 - Measure care delivery progress in primary care practices
 - **Survey content:**
 - Care delivery questions presented in 2 sections
 - Wanted practices to at least complete the first section (13 critical items) to help select comparison practices
 - **Sample: potential comparison practices**
 - **Respondent: Practice manager**
 - **Incentive: \$100 post-paid incentive for full survey completion**

How do we maximize response to critical items?

- Similar to surveys with screeners
- Can we obtain higher response rates to the screener if we offer other choices than simply full survey completion?
 - Experiment to test what choices result in highest response rates
- Anchoring (Tversky & Kahneman 1974): suggests that first piece of information is most important for decision-making process
- Research question: Does initially offering (1) a lower incentive for a smaller burden or (2) a higher incentive for a larger burden result in higher response rates?

Methods

- **Web survey fielded to 8,245 primary care practice managers**
- **Randomly assigned to one of three incentive/burden offers**
 - Offer 1: “You will receive \$100 for completing this 30-minute survey.”
 - Offer 2: “If you only have 10 minutes available, you can complete the short version of this survey for \$20, or you can receive \$100 for completing the 30-minute version.”
 - Offer 3: “You will receive \$100 for completing this 30-minute survey, but if you only have 10 minutes available, you can complete the short version for \$20.”
- **Offers were repeated in welcome packet, invitation, and mail, FedEx, email, and phone reminders**

Results

| Offer | Language | Number of assigned practices | Percent responding (brief survey only or full survey) | Percent responding to full survey | Percent responding to brief survey (but not full survey) |
|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Full survey offer only | 2,772 | 40.3 | 39.3 | 1.0 |
| 2 | Brief survey, then full survey | 2,715 | 36.9* | 35.5* | 1.4 |
| 3 | Full survey, then brief survey | 2,758 | 37.8* | 36.1* | 0.6 |

* $p < 0.05$ (χ^2 test of difference comparing offer 2 with offer 1, or comparing offer 3 with offer 1)

Discussion

- **Few respondents chose to complete just the short survey**
 - Misunderstood incentive offer for critical items only?
 - Perceived importance of completing full survey?
- **Simplest offer (\$100 for 30-min survey) outperformed both choice options**
 - Why?
- **Social exchange theory may explain**
 - Motivate survey participation by encouraging trust and having benefits outweigh costs (Dillman 2014)
 - Choice conditions increased cost because decision is more complex
 - Complexity of choice diminished the perceived reward of the incentives vs. the cost

Key Takeaways

- **Keep it simple**

- **Evidence showed the single incentive with single burden outperformed both alternatives with different incentive offers and burden requirements**
 - Choice may have overcomplicated response decision
 - Consistent with previous findings on simplicity in survey design (Antoun et al 2017; Fanning 2005; Dillman 2014)

- **Future research**

- **Explore connection between incentive amount and burden on response rates**
 - Were these results a function of simplicity, larger incentive, or both?

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