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## How Important are Primary Care Physicians and Specialists when Choosing a Medicare Plan

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**Abstract-** A primary care physician can be one of the most important components in the minds of Medicare beneficiaries. Primary care physicians are responsible for providing their patients with preventive care services as well as establishing care for individuals who are ill and require health care services. As a result, the primary care physician coordinates the patient's overall care, including referrals to specialists. The purpose of this paper was to obtain a concrete understating if primary care physicians and specialist play a key role for Medicare recipients when selecting a health care plan. The researcher evaluated the differences between the populations from Miami-Dade County and Broward County participants to determine if there were any similarities. The researcher utilized one research question in order to fulfill the objective of the paper. A total of 16 Medicare beneficiaries from two South Florida counties were interviewed.

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# How Important are Primary Care Physicians and Specialists when Choosing a Medicare Plan

Michael Castro, D.B.A.

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## I. ROLE OF PHYSICIAN IN SELECTING A MEDICARE PLAN AMONG BROWARD COUNTY MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES

Six out of the eight beneficiaries from Broward County (2 females and 4 males) reported that either their primary care physician or specialist played an important role in their selection of a health care plan. Participant age varied but did not appear to play a significant role in this. Four of the six participants only valued their primary care physician. The other two valued both their primary care physician and specialists. As a result, the Broward participants highly valued their current primary care physician.

The male participants in Broward County valued their primary care physician or specialist more than did their female counterparts. The other two participants within Broward County did not value their current primary care physician.

## II. ROLE OF PHYSICIAN IN SELECTING A MEDICARE PLAN AMONG MIAMI-DADE MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES

The eight participating Miami-Dade beneficiaries also value their primary care physician and specialists they visit on a regular basis. Of the eight, 6 participants (3 females and 3 males) responded that they highly valued their primary care physician and specialists. Two participants valued both their primary care physician and specialists. Four participants only valued their primary care physician. Their ages varied

and did not appear to have a significant impact on this decision. These findings suggested that the participants from Miami-Dade also value both their primary care physician and specialists; however, the males and females from the county equally valued these providers.

## III. COMPARISON OF PHYSICIAN ROLE IN SELECTING A MEDICARE PLAN BETWEEN BROWARD COUNTY AND MIAMI-DADE COUNTY MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES

Both the Miami-Dade County and Broward County participants value their primary care physician and specialists that they visit on a regular basis. Six of the eight from Broward County valued either their primary care physician or specialists. In Miami-Dade County, six of the eight participants also valued their primary care physician or specialists. The only difference between the participants from both counties pertained to gender. In Broward County, more males valued either their primary care physician or specialist.

In contrast, the Miami-Dade participants equally valued either their primary care physician or specialist. This research question obtained similar results regarding the importance of the members' primary care physicians and specialists being contracted with their health care plan.

## IV. SUMMARY OF THE ROLE OF PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS WHEN SELECTING A MEDICARE PLAN AMONG BROWARD COUNTY AND MIAMI-DADE COUNTY SAMPLES

The conclusion obtained from both populations resulted in the participants highly valuing their primary care physician and specialists. Six of the eight Broward County beneficiaries valued either their primary care physician or specialists. Six of the eight Miami-Dade County beneficiaries also valued their primary care physician or specialists. These 12 participants told the researcher that if their current primary care physician or specialist were not contracted to practice within a specific Medicare plan, they would not consider enrolling into that health care plan. The researcher concluded that the Miami-Dade and Broward County populations had identical responses.

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