



# A Challenge in Taiwanese National Healthcare System Healthcare Workers Perspectives



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## Introduction

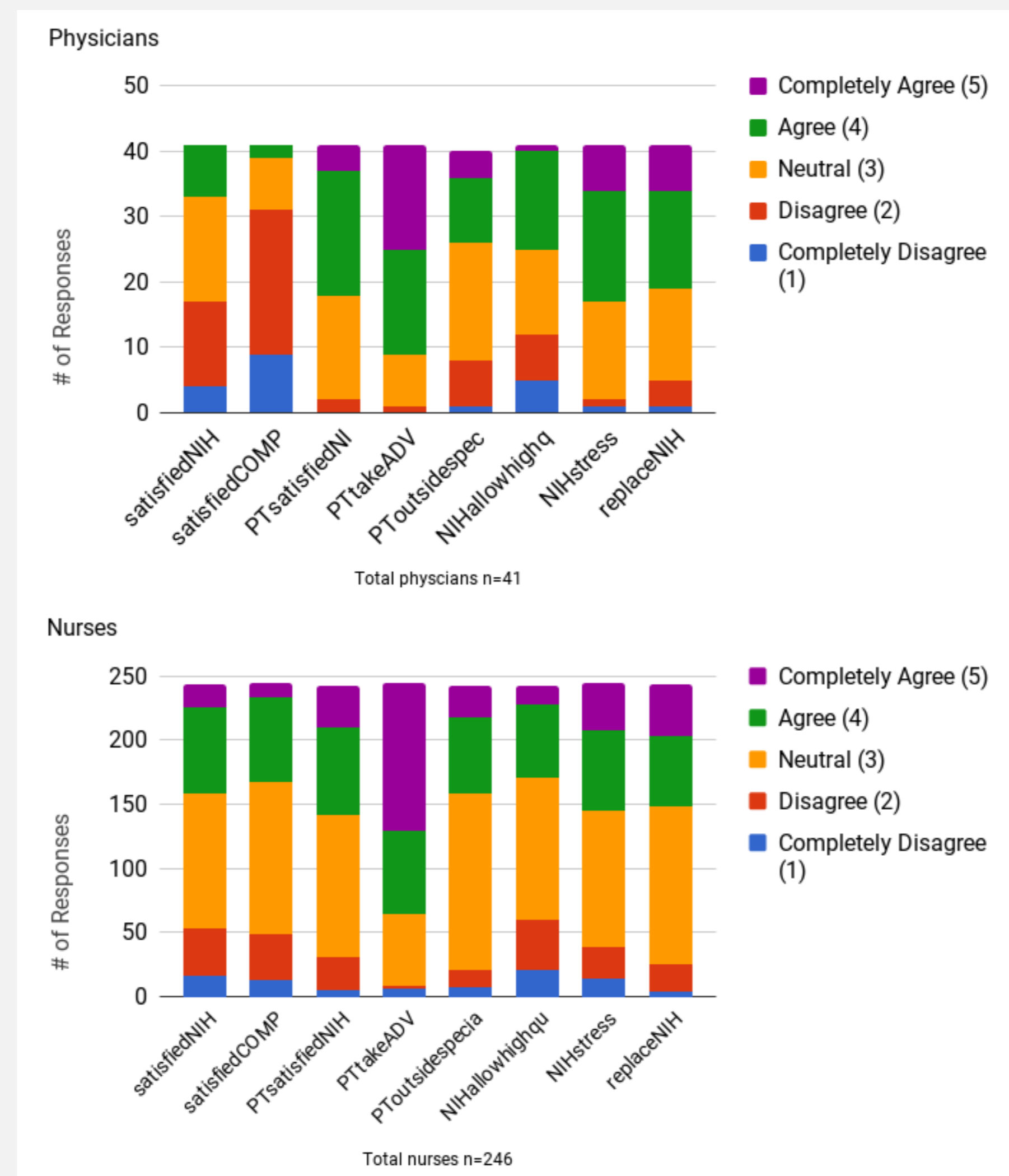
Single payer healthcare is a system where basic healthcare needs are covered by the government. Canada and Taiwan are the only two countries that currently have a single payer healthcare system. However, countries facing healthcare reform, including the United States, are considering adopting a single payer system. A major advantage of adopting this system is greater accessibility to coverage, regardless of age, income, employment, and preexisting medical conditions. However, it remains unclear if the single payer healthcare system promotes cost-effective quality of care. One approach to understanding this issue is to analyze the opinions of healthcare workers in Taiwan, where the national health insurance (NHI) was established in 1995. This system allows patients to visit the doctor for any medical condition at an affordable or no cost and is highly favored by the general public.

The objective of this study is to survey healthcare professionals in Taiwan regarding their opinions on NHI. The goal is to help shed light on the existing challenges and to promote quality of care from the perspective of healthcare providers.

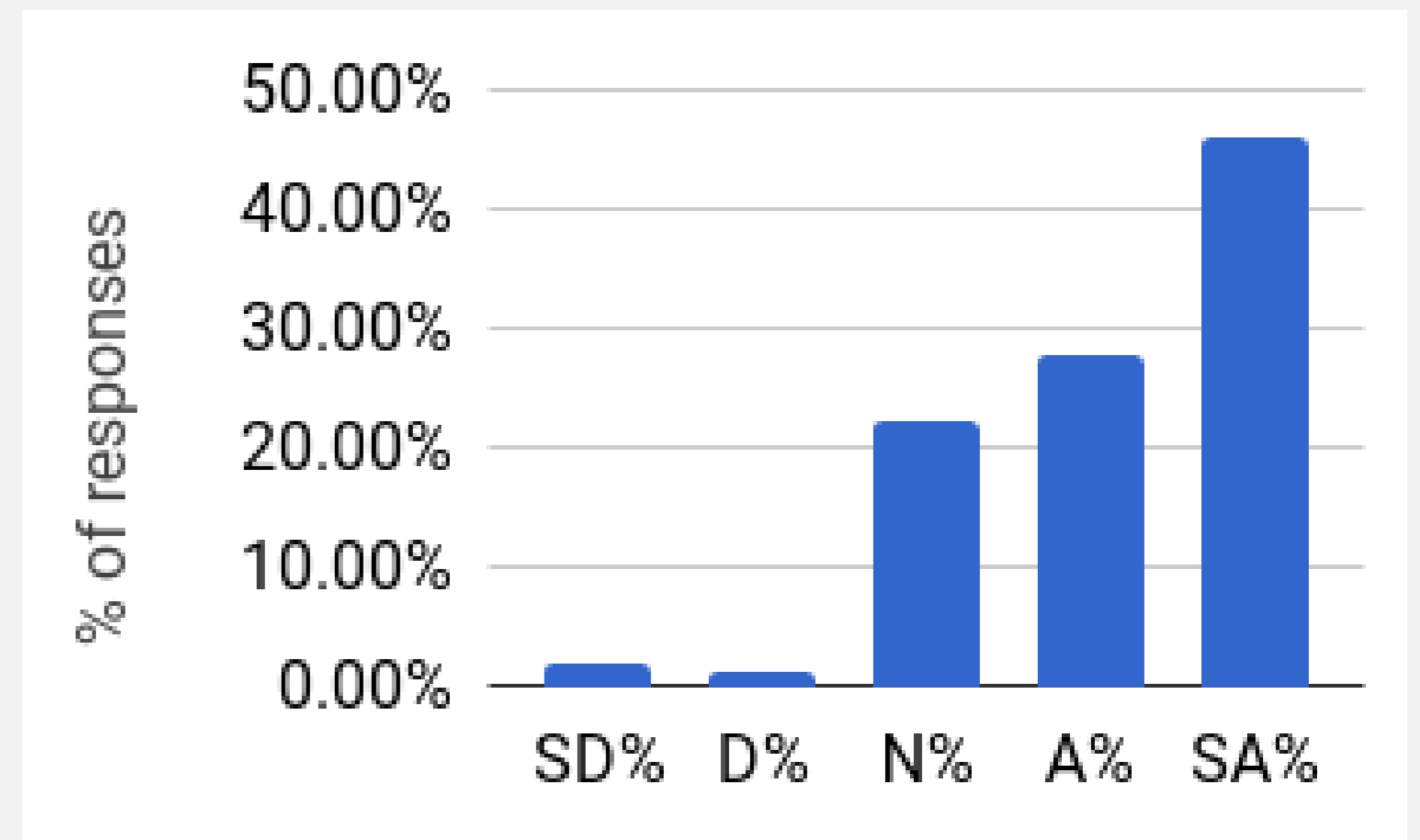
## Methods

We surveyed healthcare workers (physicians and nurses) at Taipei Hospital, using a likert scale, on their opinions of the Taiwanese NHI. Hardcopy surveys, written in Chinese, were distributed on June 19, 2017, and a total of 287 surveys were collected anonymously on June 28, 2017. The Chi square test was used to determine whether the perceptions on NHI are significantly different between physicians and nurses.

## Results



**Fig. 1 Physician and Nurse Opinions on Different Aspects of the NHI.** The majority of the surveyed healthcare workers felt neutral to seven of the eight questions asked. When comparing physician responses to nurse responses, two questions resulted in significantly different views. Specifically, 35% (n=244) of the nurses, compared to 20% (n=41) of the physicians, agreed or strongly agreed that they are satisfied with the NHI ( $p = 0.039$ ), and 31% (n=245) of the nurses, compared to 4.9% (n=41) of the physicians, agreed or strongly agreed that they are satisfied with their pay through the NHI ( $p < 0.0001$ )



**Fig. 2 Physician and Nurse Opinions on Patients take advantage of the NHI.** 74% of the healthcare workers strongly agreed (46%, n=132) or agreed (28%, n=80) that patients take advantage of the NHI ( $p < 0.0001$ ). (SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree)

## Discussion

Through the Taiwanese NHI, patients can be seen by specialists without a referral from a primary care doctor. Thus, the management and distribution of healthcare is often fragmented, allowing patients to over utilize medical resources. This might explain, at least in part, why most healthcare workers believe patients take advantage of the NHI. Future studies should examine how healthcare workers from different specialties view the NHI, as the ability of patients to bypass their primary care physician may lead to greater demand on specialists. A better understanding of the challenges faced by NHI will help develop cost-effective quality care.