

Introduction

- Patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) receiving dialysis who are employed have been shown to have higher quality-of-life scores than those who are unemployed.¹⁻³
 - Lower quality-of-life scores are associated with poorer outcomes in dialysis patients, including higher risk of mortality and hospitalization.⁴
- Despite this, unemployment rates remain high among the ESRD patient population.
 - A 2011 study demonstrated that 71% of working-age dialysis patients were unemployed.⁵
- A greater understanding of factors affecting employment among dialysis patients is needed.

Objective

We sought to assess the barriers to returning to work perceived by unemployed patients of a large dialysis organization (LDO) in the United States.

Methods

- Employment status and patient-reported barriers to employment were derived from electronic health records for active LDO patients as of 15 November 2015.
- Employment information is collected by LDO social workers every 6 months for patients age < 60 years and at least annually for patients age ≥ 60 years during the course of routine care.
- Working status categories considered were: working full-time, working part-time, working per diem, short-term disability, long-term disability, unemployed, retired, other (category includes: caregiver, homemaker, pediatric, student, training, volunteer, receiving workers' compensation).
- Additionally, among patients who identified as unemployed, the following were assessed:
 - Whether the patient expressed interested in working (Yes/No)
 - Perceived barriers to returning to work

Results

- Of 156,524 active patients identified in the data set, 37,160 (23.7%) were classified as unemployed (Figure 1).
- Among unemployed patients, 21.3% (n = 7902) reported being interested in working.
 - Within this subset of patients, the most frequently cited barriers to employment were "I don't have enough energy and/or feel too ill to work" (34.4%), "I have a disability and don't think I should be working" (11.1%), and "I need job training to return to employment" (8.0%; Figure 2).
- Stratification of patients by age revealed that while lack of energy/feeling too ill was consistently reported as the leading barrier to employment across all age categories, other categories were age dependent (Table 1).
 - Disability was identified as a barrier more frequently by older patients.
 - Need for job training and issues relating to childcare and transportation were more frequently identified as barriers by younger patients.

Figure 1: Employment Status of LDO Patients in November 2015

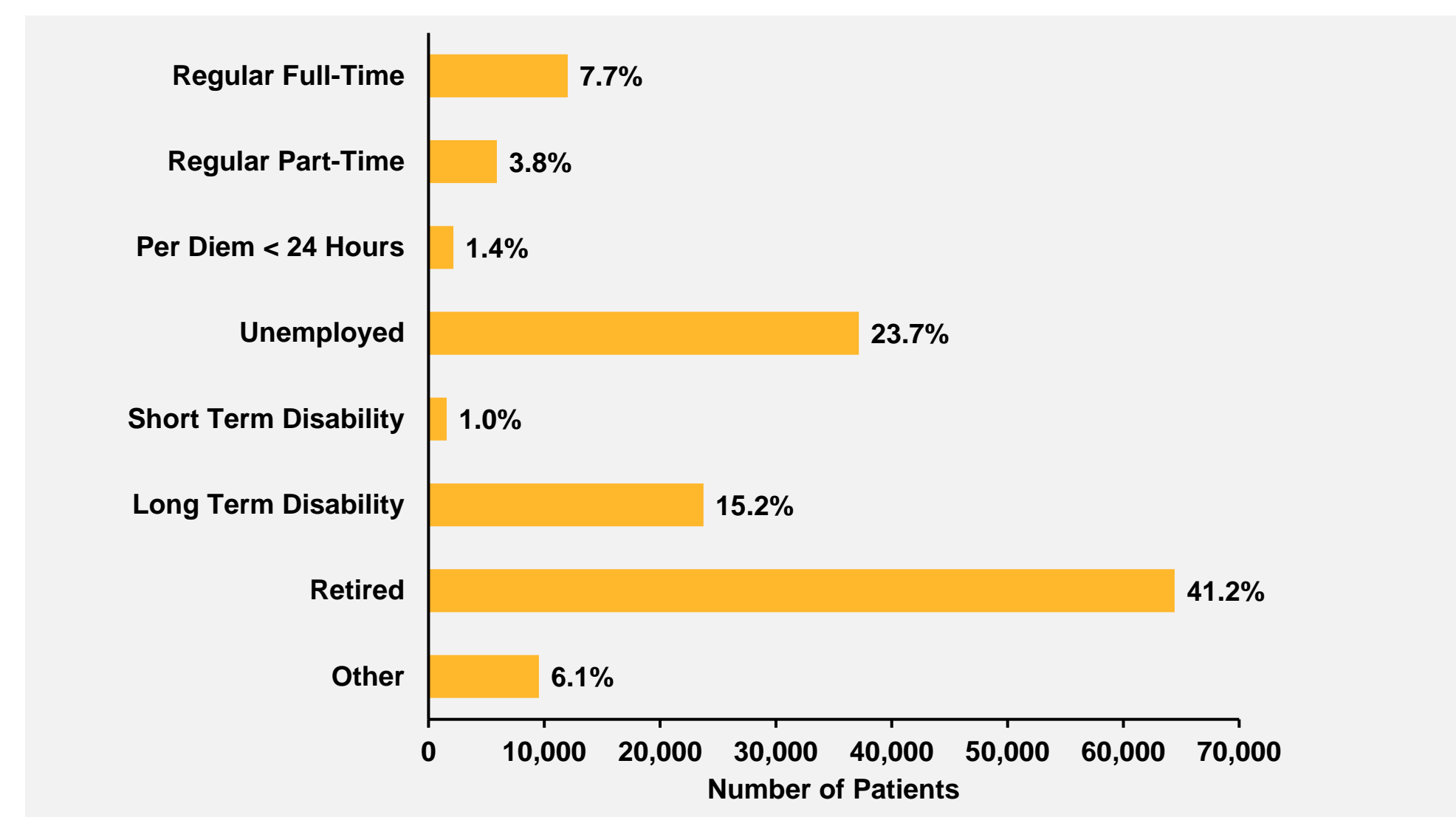


Figure 2: Perceived Barriers to Employment among Unemployed Patients who Expressed Interest in Working

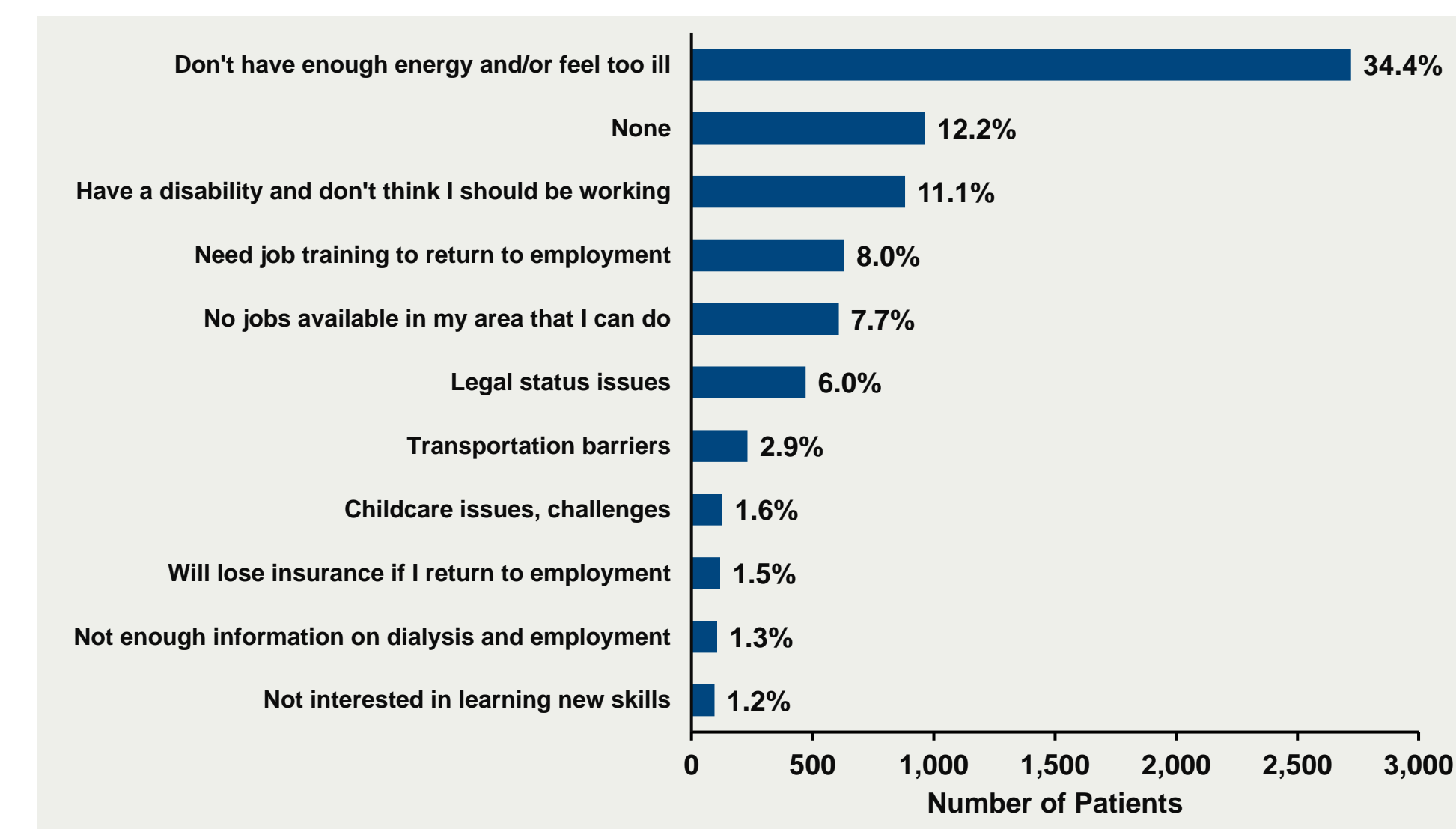


Table 1: Perceived Barriers to Employment among Unemployed Patients who Expressed Interest in Working, by Age Group

Barrier	Age Group (years)						Overall
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	
Don't have enough energy and/or feel too ill	30.8%	33.4%	38.8%	43.0%	42.3%	40.1%	34.4%
None	15.8%	14.7%	15.0%	12.2%	13.2%	14.1%	12.2%
Have a disability and don't think I should be working	6.7%	9.7%	10.4%	14.5%	18.1%	29.6%	11.1%
Need job training to return to employment	14.8%	11.5%	9.3%	8.1%	5.0%	3.5%	8.0%
No jobs available in my area that I can do	8.6%	8.7%	9.7%	8.3%	9.1%	2.1%	7.7%
Legal status issues	10.3%	8.6%	7.0%	5.6%	5.6%	2.1%	6.0%
Transportation barriers	4.5%	4.1%	3.2%	3.0%	2.8%	3.5%	2.9%
Childcare issues, challenges	4.0%	4.8%	1.7%	0.7%	0.4%	0.0%	1.6%
Will lose insurance if I return to employment	2.2%	1.7%	1.9%	1.8%	0.6%	0.7%	1.5%
Not enough information on dialysis and employment	0.9%	1.7%	1.9%	1.5%	1.2%	0.0%	1.3%
Not interested in learning new skills	1.5%	1.0%	1.1%	1.4%	1.7%	4.2%	1.2%

Summary and Conclusions

- Unemployment rates among dialysis patients are high: as of November 2015, 23.7% of active LDO patients were classified as unemployed.
- Among unemployed dialysis patients who expressed an interest in working, lack of energy or feeling too ill was the most frequently identified barrier to employment; the relative significance of other factors varied based on patient age.
- To be most effective, initiatives designed to support patients returning to work should target the specific issues that may prevent patients from working and should take into account differences across age groups.

References

- Lopes A, Bragg-Gresham J, Goodkin D, et al. Factors associated with health-related quality of life among hemodialysis patients in the DOPPS. *Qual Life Res.* 2007;16(4):545-557.
- Curtin RB, Oberley ET, Sacksteder P, Friedman A. Differences between employed and nonemployed dialysis patients. *Am J Kidney Dis.* 1996;27(4):533-540.
- Kutner NG, Zhang R, Huang Y, Johansen KL. Depressed mood, usual activity level, and continued employment after starting dialysis. *Clin J Am Soc Nephrol.* 2010;5(11):2040-2045.
- Mapes DL, Bragg-Gresham JL, Bommer J, et al. Health-related quality of life in the Dialysis Outcomes and Practice Patterns Study (DOPPS). *Am J Kidney Dis.* 2004;44(5 Suppl 2):54-60.
- Muehrer RJ, Schatell D, Witten B, Gangnon R, Becker BN, Hofmann RM. Factors affecting employment at initiation of dialysis. *Clin J Am Soc Nephrol.* 2011;6(3):489-496.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere appreciation to more than 1800 social workers in more than 2000 DaVita clinics who work every day to take care of patients and also to ensure the extensive data collection on which our work is based. We thank DaVita Clinical Research® (DCR®), and specifically acknowledge Abigail Hunt, PhD, of DCR for editorial contributions in preparing this poster.

This study was funded by DaVita HealthCare Partners Inc.

*Correspondence: deborah.evans@davita.com

Poster available at www.davitaclinicalresearch.com

National Kidney Foundation Spring Clinical Meetings, April 27–May1, 2016; Boston, MA.