2002 NZFP Readership Survey

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The College thanks the members who participated in the 2002 *New Zealand Family Physician* (*NZFP*) Readership Survey. The information that you provided will help the College to ensure that *NZFP* continues to meet members' needs. We congratulate the participant (who requested anonymity) who won a one-year subscription to the College. The results of the Readership Survey are summarised in this article.

The aims of the Survey were to: identify College members' 'reading behaviour' in relation to NZFP; and compare College members' 'reading behaviour' across four New Zealand medical publications. Three hundred and forty-nine members completed a questionnaire about NZFP.

New Zealand Family Physician

College members were asked to indicate the way in which they usually read *NZFP*. Half of the 349 respondents (52%) usually skimmed the whole journal and read the articles that they were interested in. Twenty-one per cent of the respondents read most of the articles and 17 per cent read articles of interest only. Almost three-quarters of the respondents (73%) indicated that *NZFP* usually provided them with useful information that they were unable to obtain elsewhere.

Information was gathered from members about the frequency with which they usually read each section in *NZFP*. Most of the respondents read: the contents page in every issue of *NZFP*, the main editorial features and CME section in most or some issues of the journal; and the remaining sections in some issues of *NZFP*.

College members were asked to suggest improvements to *NZFP*. Respondents were able to make a multiple number of comments so the analysis is based on the number of responses (n = 102). The most common suggestion was to increase the number of articles on clinical general practice. Suggested topics were patients with unusual case presentations, treatments and how to minimise system errors (20%).

The next most common suggestions were:

- include more evidence-based articles such as 'better', peer reviewed, original scientific papers (9%);
- improve the layout of the journal (9%);
- include articles on topics such as new drugs; travel medicine; rural general practice; the history of general practice; information technology in general practice (including practice management software and internet sites); public health promotion; and the health care system (9%); and
- include more light-hearted features such as cartoons; a quiz; a cryptic crossword; a multiple choice questionnaire; and a prize for the best original scientific paper (9%).

Members were invited to comment generally on *NZFP*. They were able to make a multiple number of comments so the number of responses is the denominator (n = 43). Over three-quarters of the responses (77%) indicated that NZFP is an excellent journal.

"I like the format of recent years and balance of CME vs original research vs articles of 'political interest'."

"It is an important journal to enable GP researchers to publish their work…".

New Zealand medical publications

College members were asked to indicate the average length of time that they spent reading one issue of the medical publications *GP*, *New Ethicals*, *NZ Doctor* and *NZFP*. The proportion of respondents (42%) who spent 30 minutes or more reading one issue of *NZFP* was greater than the proportions for *GP* (18%), *New Ethicals* (32%) and *NZ Doctor* (20%).

Information was collected about the average number of times that members referred to an issue of each of the aforementioned medical publications. Approximately half (49%) of the respondents referred to an issue of *NZFP* more than once. This proportion is almost equivalent to the proportion of respondents (51%) who referred to *New Ethicals* more than once. Twenty-three per cent of the respondents referred to *GP* and *NZ Doctor* (respectively) two or more times.

Members indicated whether they usually kept the aforementioned medical publications for future reference. Eighty per cent of the respondents either kept *NZFP*, or articles of interest out of *NZFP*. This proportion is similar to the proportion for *New Ethicals* (74%). Smaller proportions of respondents either kept the publication, or articles of interest, from *GP* (40%) and *NZ Doctor* (41%).

Conclusion

The respondents tended to skim each issue of *NZFP* and read the articles that they were interested in. The respondents generally kept *NZFP* (or articles from it) for future reference and many referred to the journal more than once. This might be due to *NZFP* providing members with useful information that they were unable to obtain elsewhere.

The respondents' 'reading behaviour' in relation to *NZFP* was similar to that for *New Ethicals*, except that respondents spent a longer time reading one issue of *NZFP*.

There are opportunities to improve *NZFP* in areas such as layout, the number of evidence-based articles, the number of articles on clinical general practice and the number of light-hearted features in the journal.