

## THE PRACTICE OF DEFENSIVE MEDICINE:

A SURVEY OF GEORGIA PHYSICIANS

Prepared for:

**Patients for Fair Compensation**

Prepared by:

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Fellow PRSA**



OPPENHEIM RESEARCH

**January 12, 2012**

# INTRODUCTION

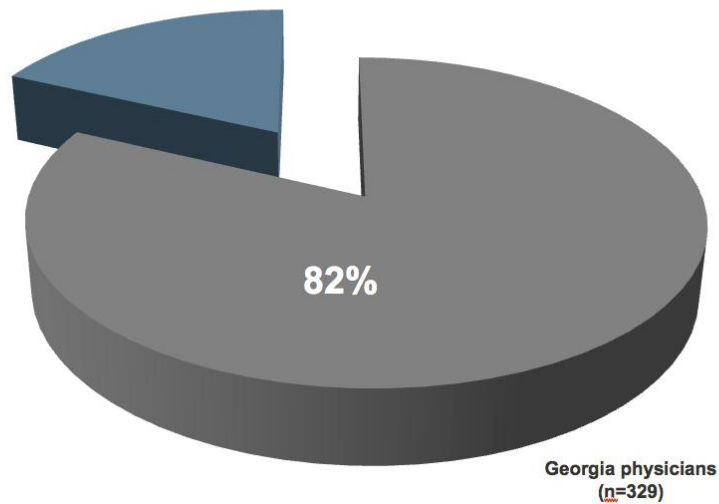
Patients for Fair Compensation contracted with Jay Rayburn, APR, CPRC, Ph.D., to conduct a survey of Georgia medical doctors and osteopathic physicians. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain attitudes of Georgia physicians toward the practice of defensive medicine. A random sample of 330 licensed physicians was conducted during January 2012. The data were collected by Oppenheim Research of Tallahassee, FL. A sample of this size has an approximate error rate of plus or minus 5.5% at the 95% level of confidence. This means we are 95% sure that if we had interviewed all licensed physicians in Georgia, we would have found within plus or minus 5.5% of what the survey found.

For the purposes of this survey, the Merriam-Webster definition was given to respondents: The practice of ordering medical tests, procedures, or consultations of doubtful value in order to protect the prescribing physician from malpractice suits.

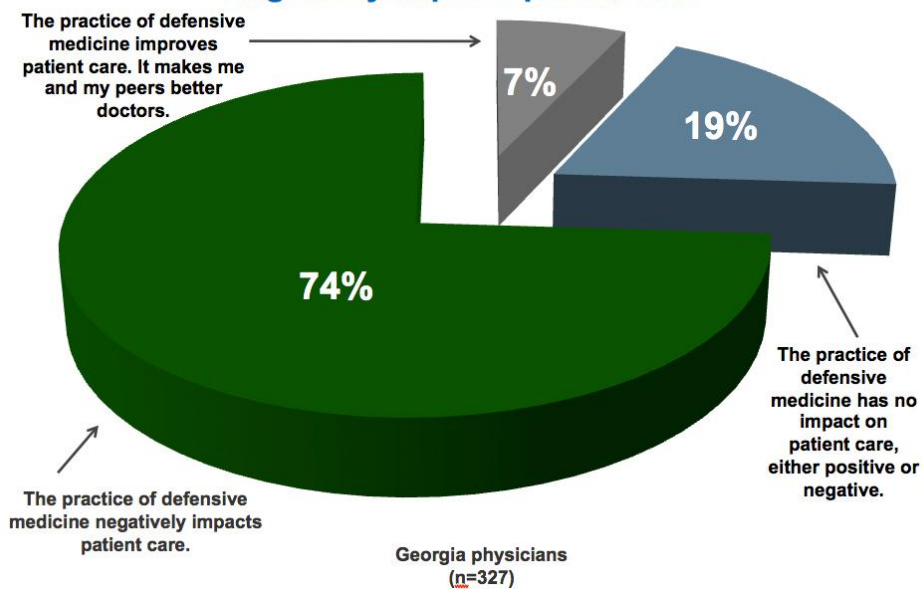
Following are the highlights of the findings. Appendix A contains the frequency distributions for each question.

# FINDINGS

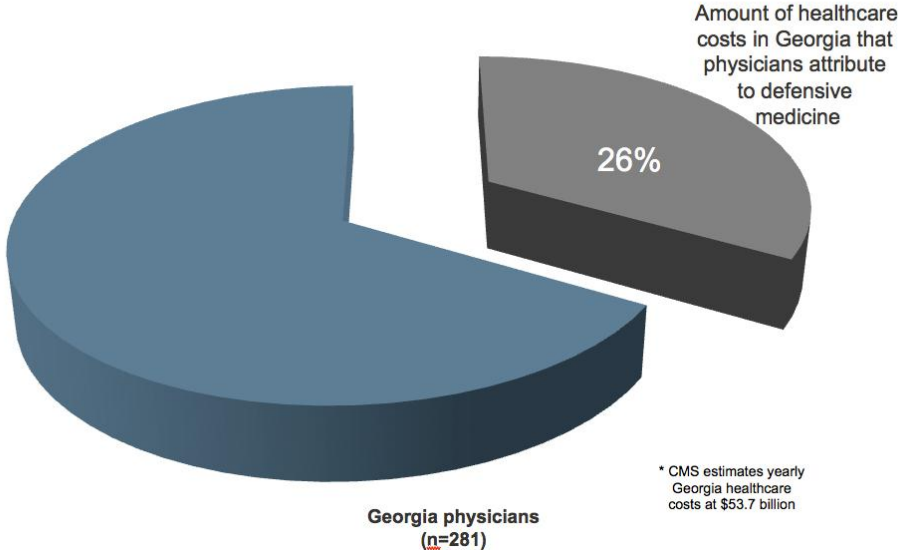
## 82% of Georgia doctors practice defensive medicine



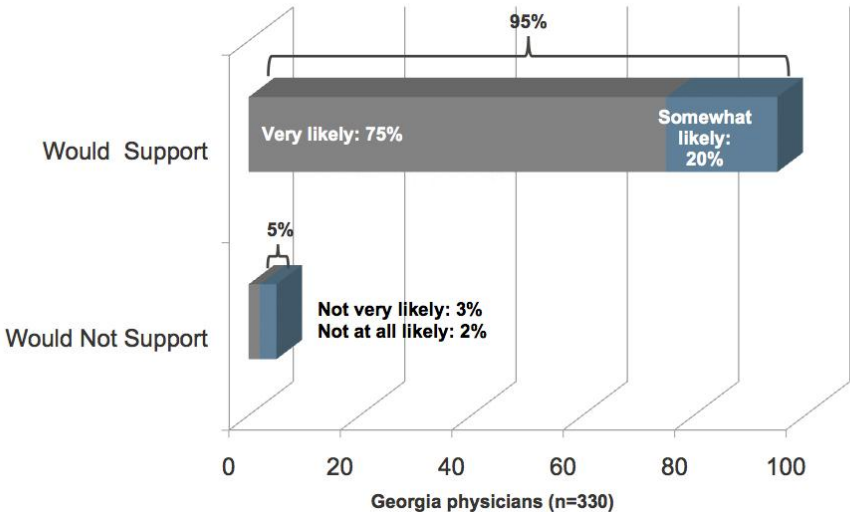
## 74% of Georgia doctors believe defensive medicine negatively impacts patient care



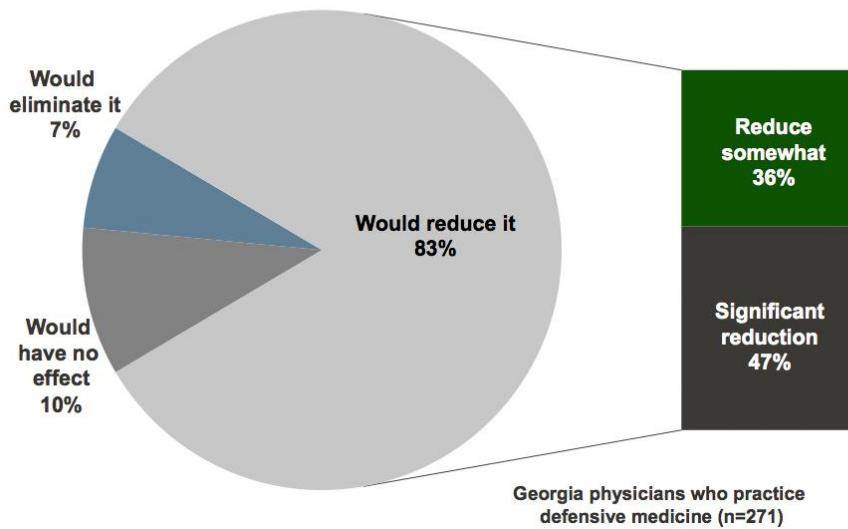
### Estimate: Defensive Medicine Costs Georgia \$14 billion\* per year



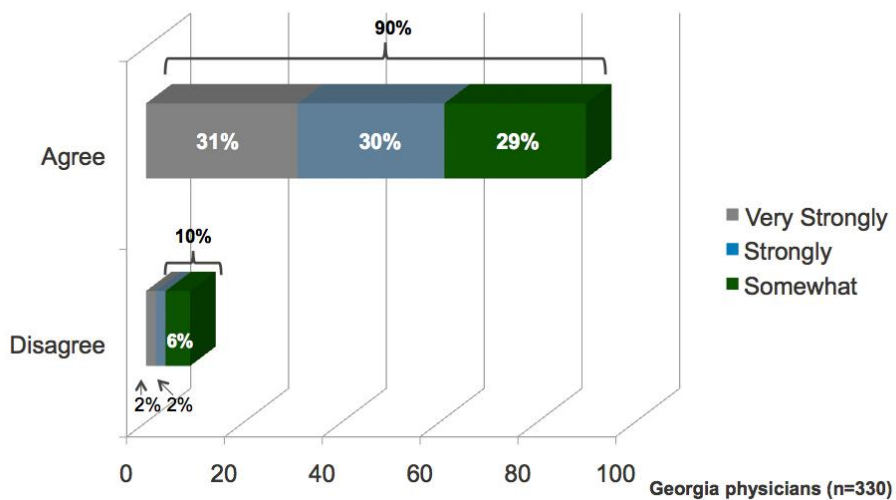
### 95% of Georgia doctors support Patients' Compensation System proposal



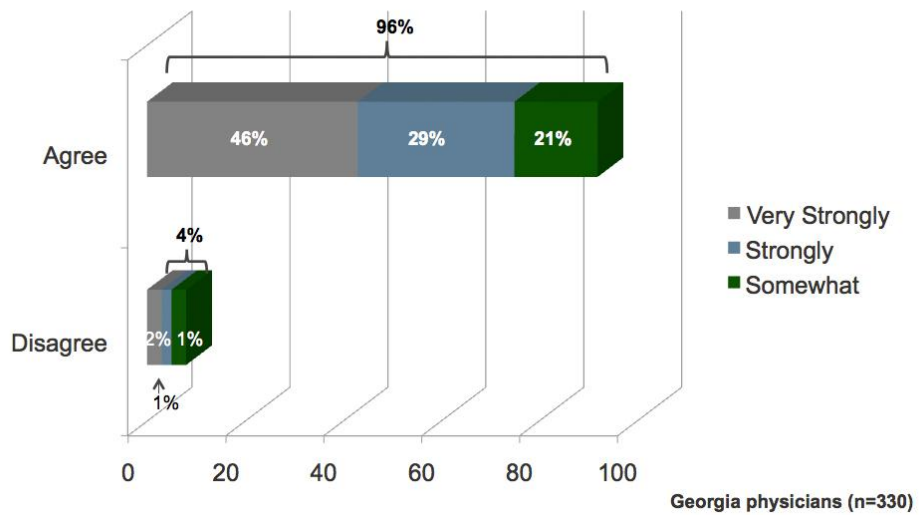
**90% of the Georgia doctors who practice defensive medicine would reduce or eliminate this practice under PCS**



**90% of Georgia physicians agree PCS would improve the quality and safety of patient care**



## 96% of Georgia physicians agree PCS would reduce the cost of healthcare

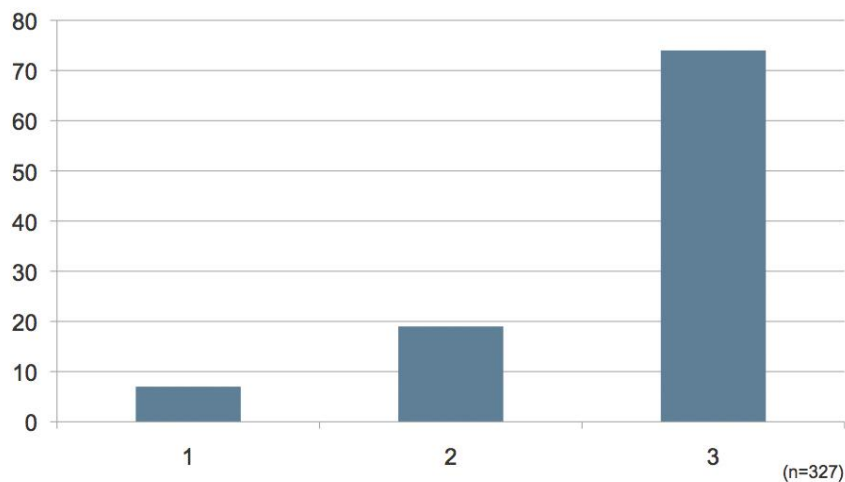


These findings clearly indicate an overwhelming support on the part of licensed physicians for the proposed legislation.

# APPENDIX A

## FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS

1. First, which of the following statements best reflects your opinion about how the practice of defensive medicine affects patient care?



1 = (7%) The practice of defensive medicine improves patient care. It makes me and my peers better doctors.

2 = (19%) The practice of defensive medicine has no impact on patient care, either positive or negative.

3 = (74%) The practice of defensive medicine negatively impacts patient care.



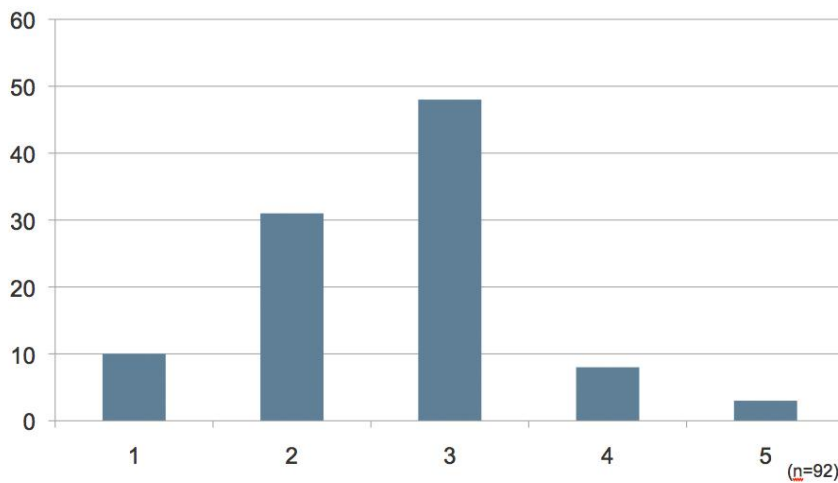
2. Thinking broadly, what percentage of overall healthcare costs do you attribute to the practice of defensive medicine? Please give a specific percent, not a range.

Average = 26%

Range = 2% to 90%

(n = 281)

3. If you don't have an opinion on question 2 but had to guess, would you say it is:



1 = (10%) Less than 10%

2 = (31%) 10% to less than 25%

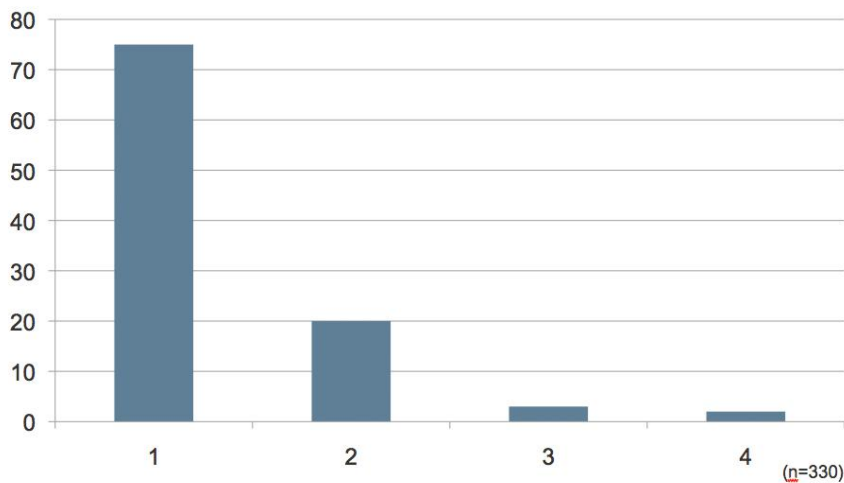
3 = (48%) 25% to less than 50%

4 = (8%) 50% to less than 75%

5 = (3%) 75% or more

Participants were told that in 2012, legislation will be proposed to address defensive medicine. This legislation is called the Patient Injury Act. It proposes to replace the current Medical Tort System with a no-fault system legally similar to Workers' Compensation. It will be called the Patients' Compensation System. After hearing a description of the system participants were asked:

4. If this law is proposed in 2012, how likely would you be to support it?



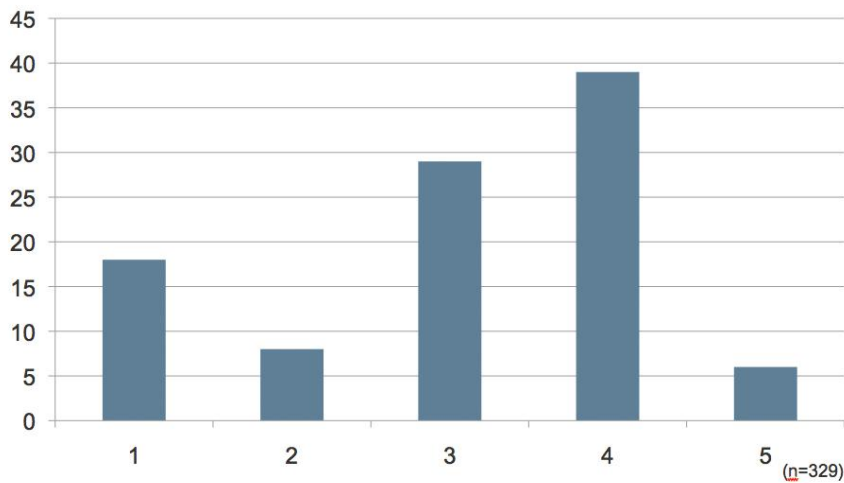
1 = (75%) Very Likely

2 = (20%) Somewhat Likely

3 = (3%) Not Very Likely

4 = (2%) Not at All Likely

5. If this legislation becomes law, what impact would it have on your tendency to practice defensive medicine?



1 = (18%) I do not currently practice defensive medicine.

2 = (8%) It would have no effect on my practice of defensive medicine.

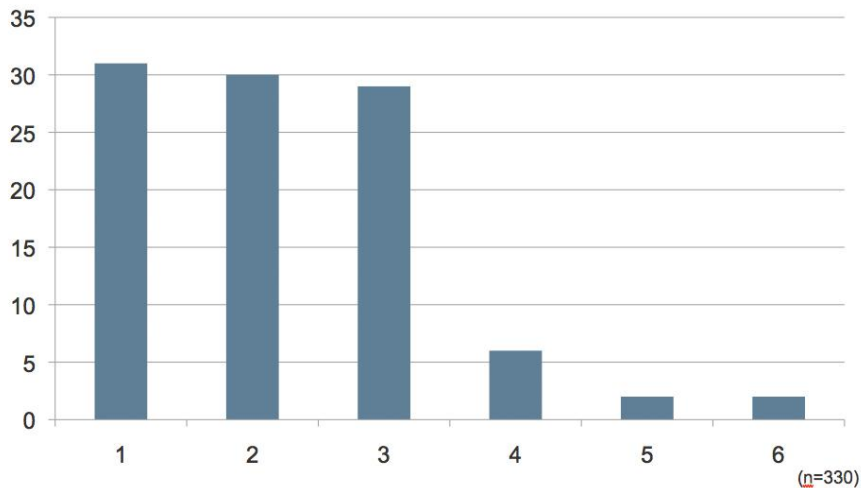
3 = (29%) It would somewhat reduce my practice of defensive medicine.

4 = (39%) It would significantly reduce my practice of defensive medicine.

5 = (6%) It would eliminate my practice of defensive medicine.

6. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*If this law is passed, physicians will no longer live in fear of litigation. They will be able to admit mistakes. Further, they will be able to develop and share lessons learned and best practices with each other. This will result in improved quality of care and patient safety.*



1 = (31%) Very Strongly Agree

2 = (30%) Strongly Agree

3 = (29%) Somewhat Agree

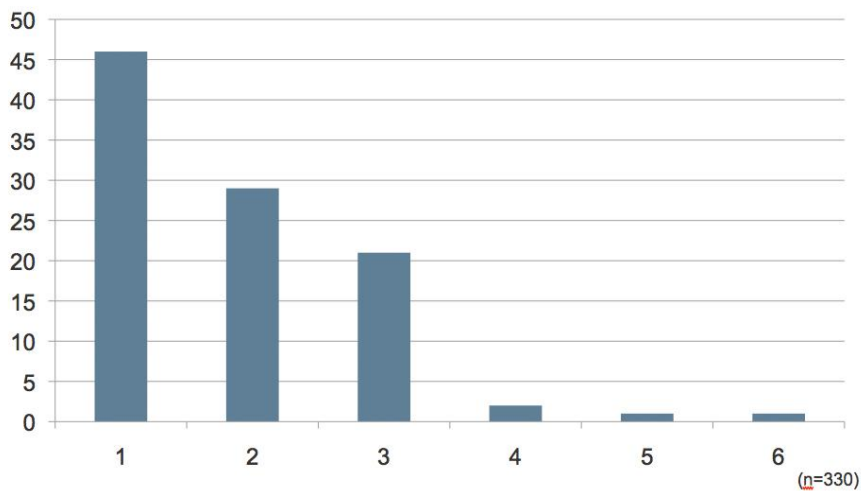
4 = (6%) Somewhat Disagree

5 = (2%) Strongly Disagree

6 = (2%) Very Strongly Disagree

7. To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*If this law is passed, the new system will reduce the costs of healthcare by reducing the practice of defensive medicine.*



1 = (46%) Very Strongly Agree

2 = (29%) Strongly Agree

3 = (21%) Somewhat Agree

4 = (2%) Somewhat Disagree

5 = (1%) Strongly Disagree

6 = (1%) Very Strongly Disagree

## ABOUT THE SURVEY ADMINISTRATOR

Jay Rayburn, APR, CPRC, Ph.D., Fellow PRSA is an associate professor and division director of the public relations and advertising division in the School of Communication at Florida State University where he also serves as Director of the Communication Research Center in the College of Communication and Information. He has served as a member of the editorial boards of *Communications Research*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* and *Journalism Monographs*, and on editorial review panels for Random House, Wadsworth Publishing and Gilford Publishing. He has counseled a wide range of clients about research, strategic planning, crisis management, and other related communications activities. He has published chapters in academic and professional books, 14 articles in academic journals, and presented more than 150 papers at academic and professional association meetings. Throughout his career he has conducted hundreds of surveys and focus groups for corporations, governmental entities, and not-for-profit organizations.