

Characteristics and Perceptions of the Medicare Population: 2001-2005

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The Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) is a continuous panel survey of a nationally-representative sample of Medicare enrollees. The survey collects a variety of information on these Medicare beneficiaries with a focus on the social, economic, and demographic characteristics of the Medicare population, beneficiaries' health status, and their health care services, cost, and sources of payment.

The data collected in the MCBS has been a valuable statistical tool for many researchers and aides those in writing articles and publications. One such publication that has used data from the MCBS is *The Characteristics and Perceptions of the Medicare Population*. This annual publication serves as a source book based on the Access to Care Data File from the MCBS and focuses on the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the Medicare population, their health status, their health insurance coverage, and their access to and satisfaction with Medicare services.

This highlight will examine several of the topics included in *The Characteristics and Perceptions of the Medicare Population* from 2001-2005. The data in the following figures is for community Medicare beneficiaries. Based on the data in the figures, we can see areas of improvement within the Medicare Program as well as areas

that may need further attention. Overall, it appears that Medicare beneficiaries are increasingly satisfied with many aspects of their care. It also appears that beneficiaries are utilizing the preventive services that are made available to them. More male beneficiaries are getting blood screening done for prostate cancer and an increasing number of female beneficiaries are having mammograms and pap smears performed. Specifically, in 2005, 66 percent of males had a blood screening done for prostate cancer compared to 61 percent in 2001. Overall, the percentage of female Medicare beneficiaries' having a mammogram remained stable. In 2001, 52 percent had a mammogram performed compared to 51 percent in 2005. The amount of Medicare beneficiaries' receiving flu or pneumonia shots is also generally on the rise excluding a drop in flu vaccination rates between 2004 and 2005 which could be attributed to a flu vaccine shortage during that time. We also see that the reported diagnosing of chronic conditions is on the rise. Specifically, there has been a slight increase in diabetes, hypertension, and osteoporosis. Bucking this trend, heart disease has been on the decline. From 2001 to 2005 the rate of beneficiaries' reporting they had heart disease decreased by 5 percent. One specific area of the Medicare Program that may need further attention is Medicare beneficiaries' knowledge of Medicare information. In 2001, 43 percent of Medicare beneficiaries' reported they knew most or all of the Medicare information they needed

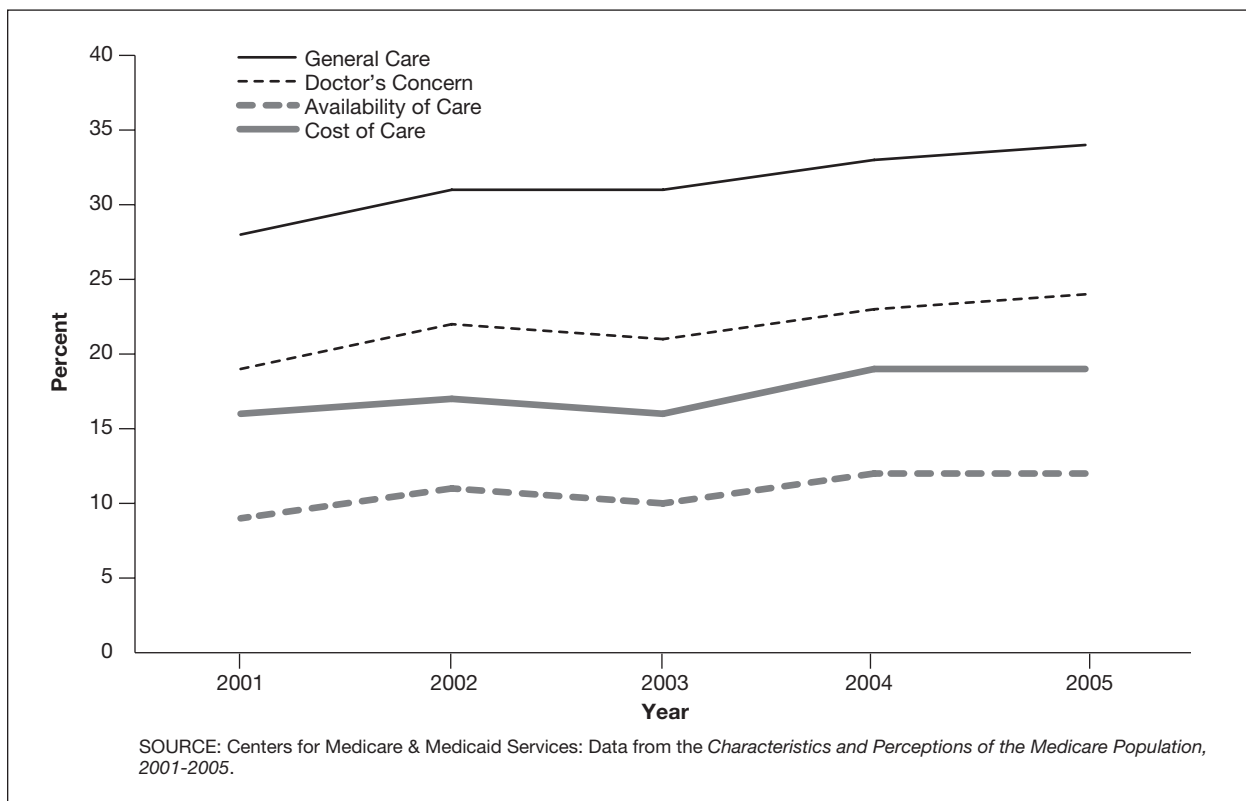
NOTE: Highlights are not peer reviewed.

The author is with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The statements expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of CMS.

to know compared to 35 percent in 2005. Most of this decline occurred between 2004 and 2005 and could be the result of the increasing complexity of the Medicare Program as a result of the implementation of the 2003 Medicare Prescription

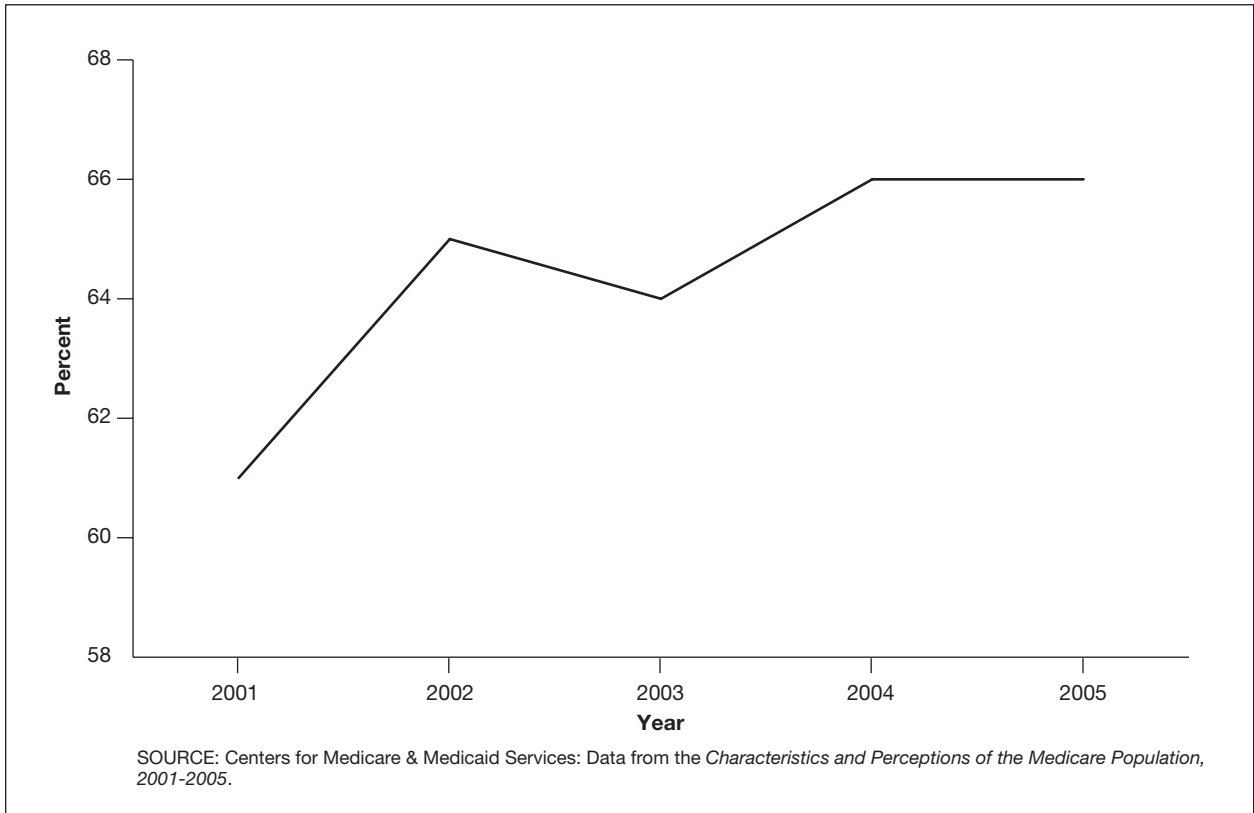
Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act. Additional information is available at: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mcbs>.

Figure 1
Percent of Medicare Beneficiaries Who Reported Being Very Satisfied With Their Care and Cost of Care: 2001-2005



- The percent of beneficiaries who were very satisfied with their general care increased from 28 percent in 2001 to 34 percent in 2005.
- Beneficiaries' satisfaction with their cost of care showed only a slight increase from 16 percent in 2001 to 19 percent in 2005.

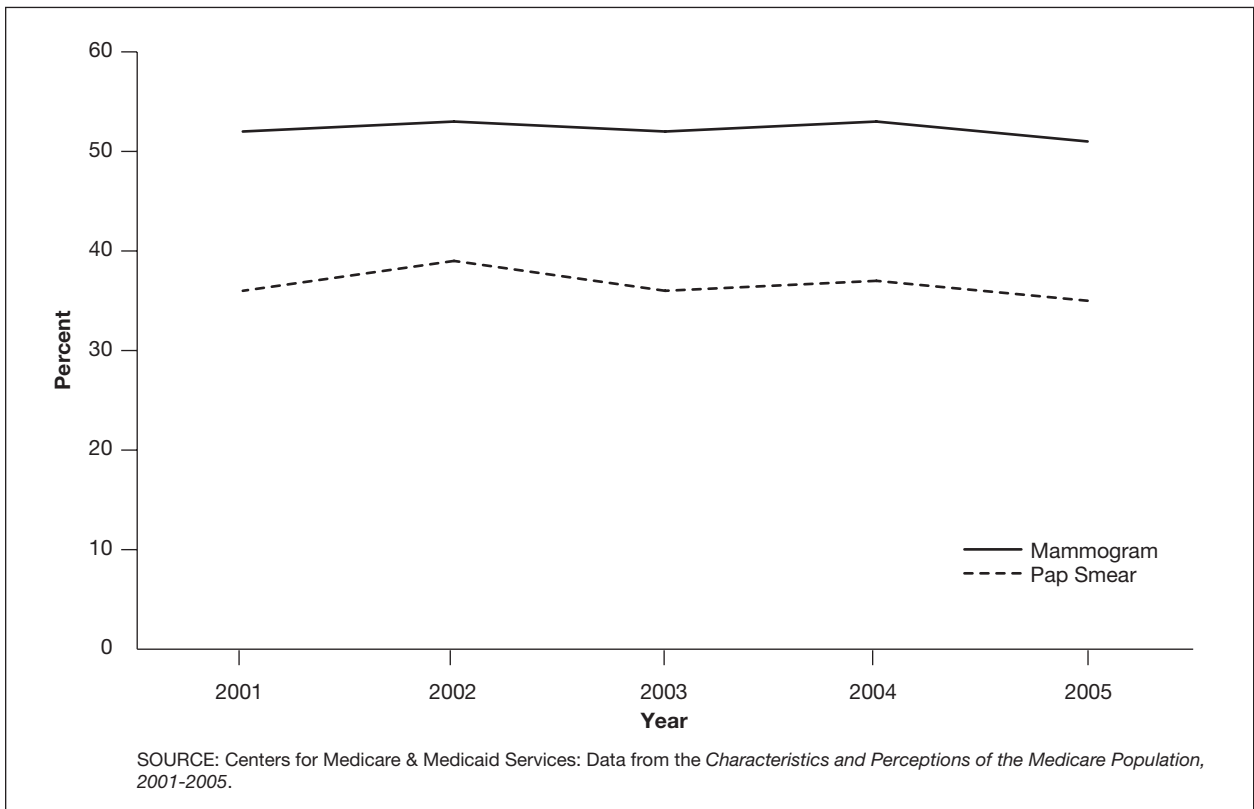
Figure 2
Percent of Male Medicare Beneficiaries Who Had a Blood Test Done for the Prevention of Prostate Cancer: 2001-2005



- The percent of beneficiaries who reported having blood screening done for the early detection of prostate cancer increased from 61 percent in 2001 to 66 percent in 2005.

Figure 3

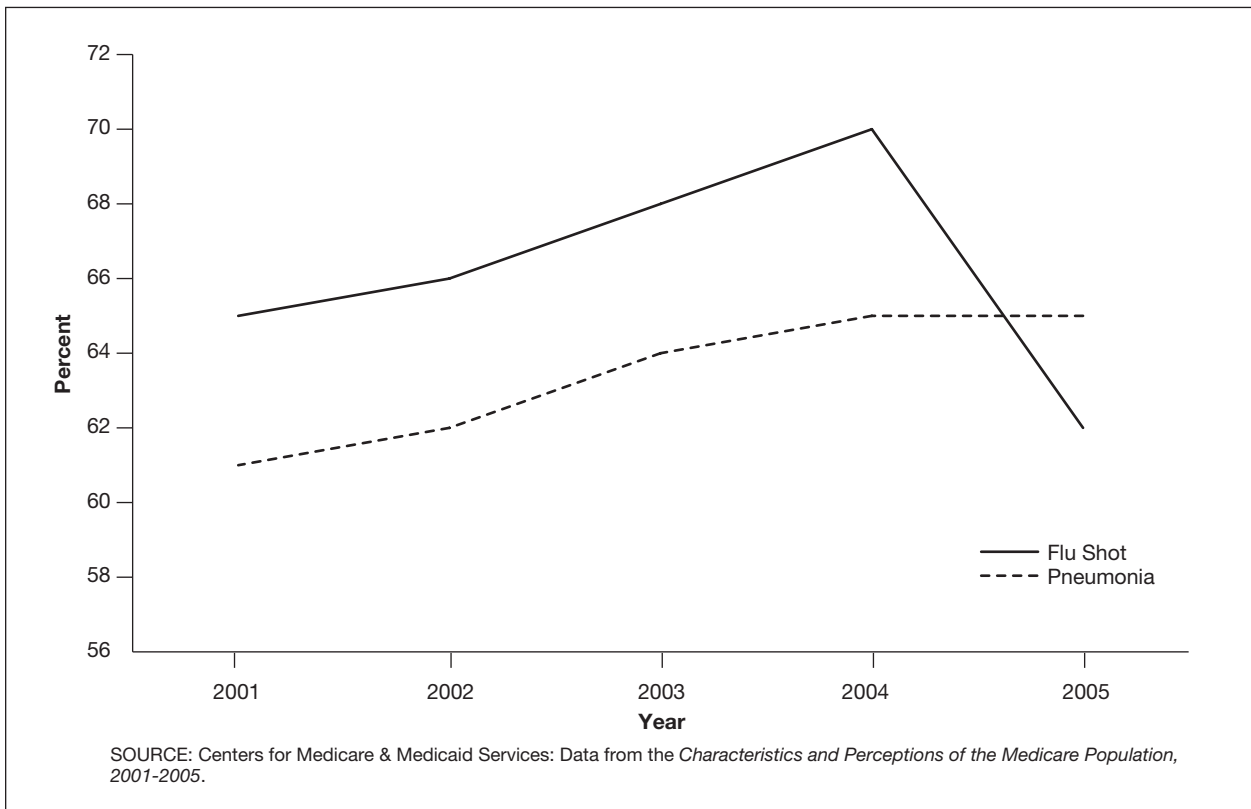
Percent of Female Medicare Beneficiaries Who Had a Mammogram or Pap Smear: 2001-2005



- The percent of female Medicare beneficiaries receiving a mammogram or pap smear remained stable.
- Over one-half of female beneficiaries had a mammogram and more than one-third had a pap smear.

Figure 4

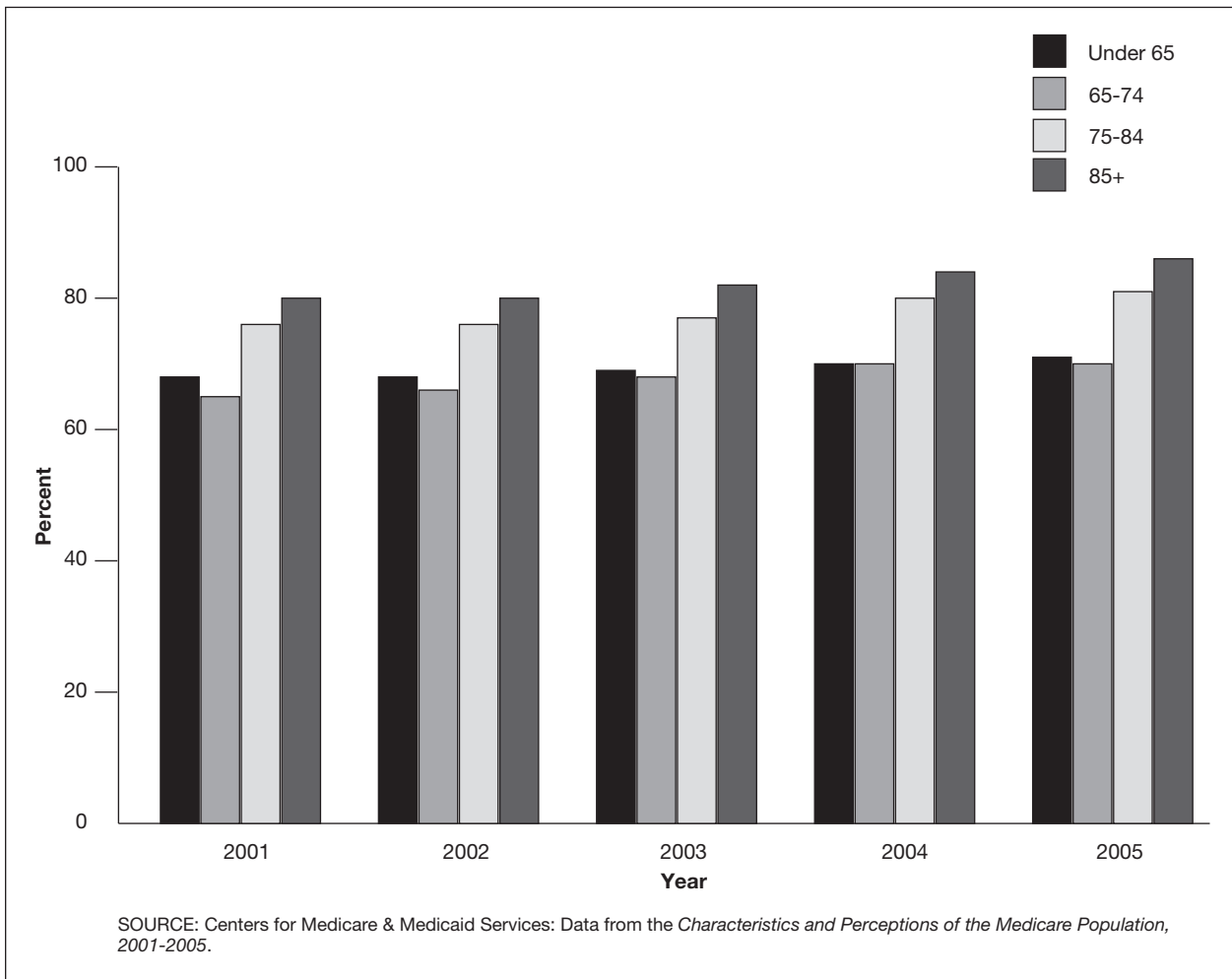
Percent of Community Medicare Beneficiaries Who Had a Flu or Pneumonia Shot: 2001-2005



- The percent of Medicare beneficiaries receiving a flu shot increased steadily from 2001 to 2004. The percent of beneficiaries who received a flu shot increased from 65 percent in 2001 to 70 percent in 2004.
- In 2005, the reported rate of beneficiaries' receiving a flu shot decreased 7 percent from 2004. This may be attributed to a shortage of the flu vaccine between 2004 and 2005.

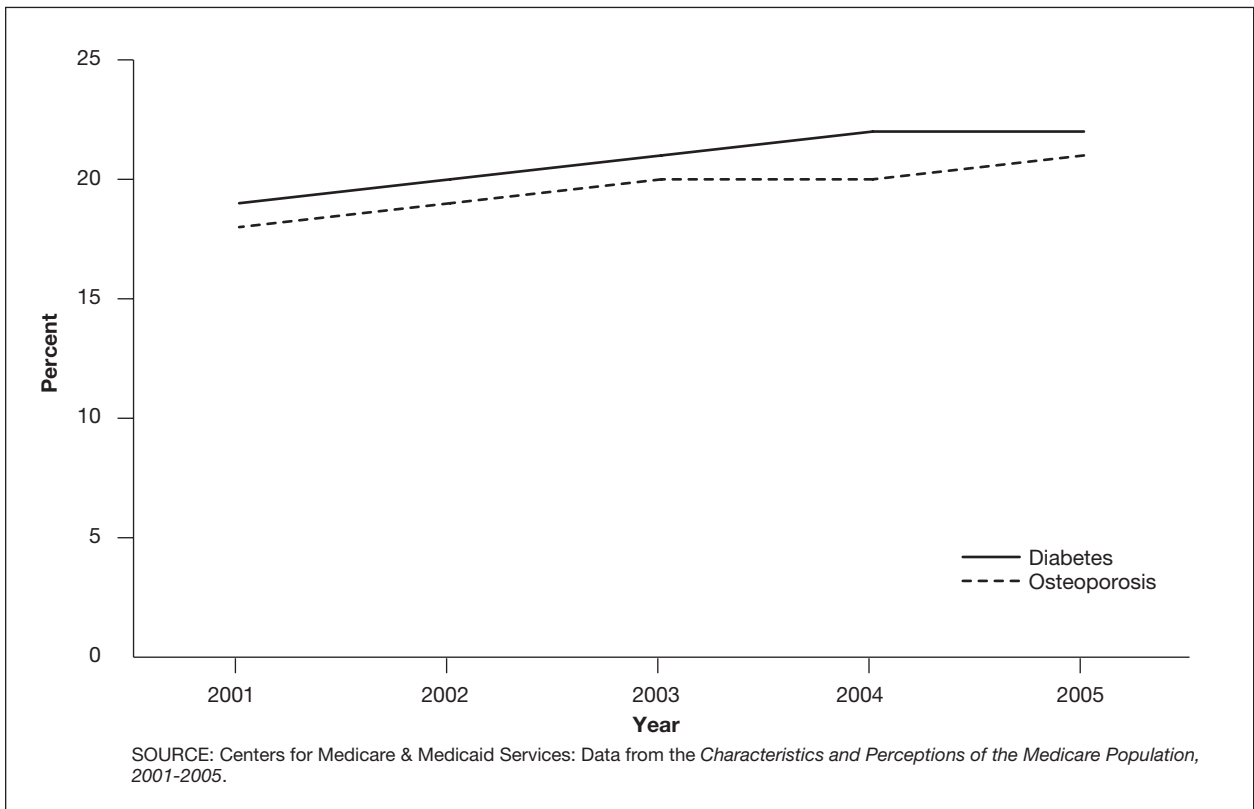
Figure 5

Percent of Medicare Beneficiaries With Two or More Chronic Conditions, by Age: 2001-2005



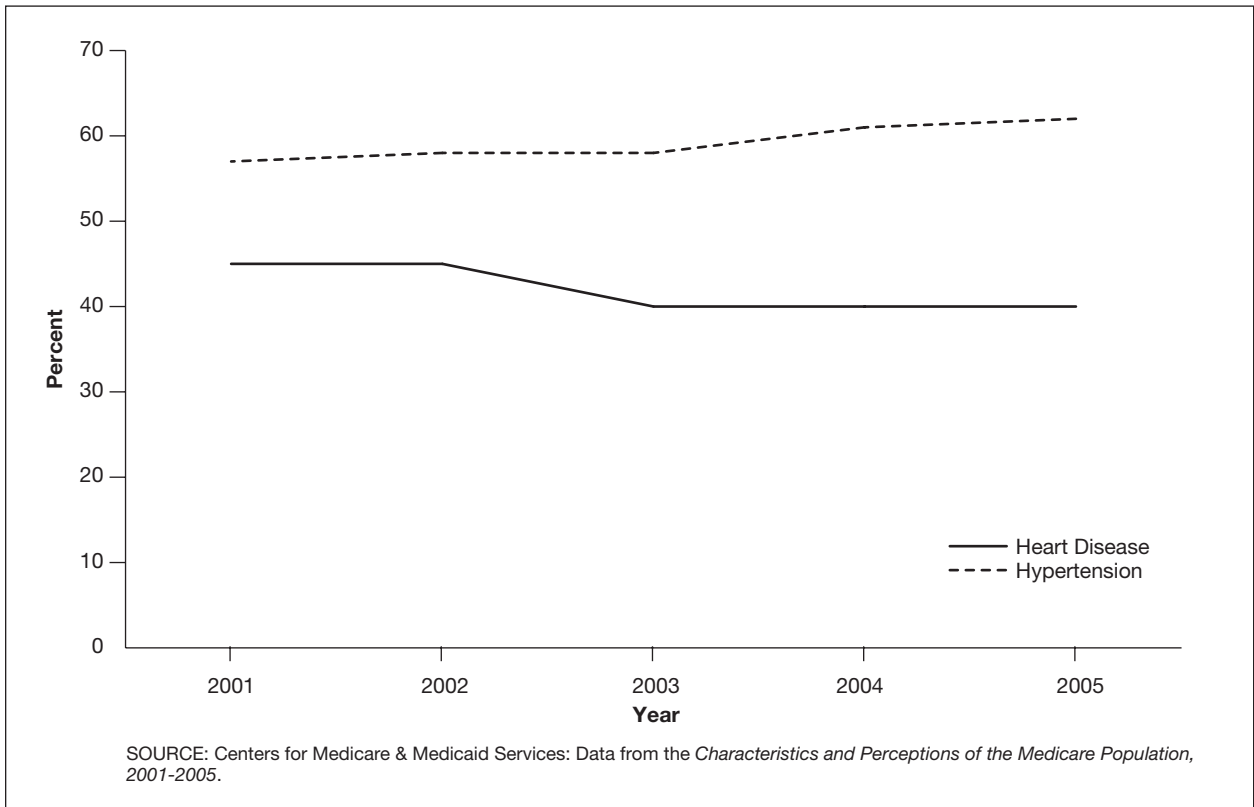
- As might be expected, the percent of beneficiaries reporting two or more chronic conditions increased every year for the past 5 years.
- As age increased, the percentage of aged beneficiaries with two or more chronic conditions also increased. Beneficiaries age 85 or over were more likely to have Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, stroke, osteoporosis, or a broken hip. Cancer rates were highest for beneficiaries age 75-84. Disabled beneficiaries had higher than average rate of diabetes and pulmonary disease.

Figure 6
Percent of Medicare Beneficiaries Who Had Diabetes or Osteoporosis: 2001-2005



- The percent of beneficiaries who reported having diabetes increased from 19 percent in 2001 to 22 percent in 2005.
- The percent of beneficiaries who reported having osteoporosis increased from 18 percent in 2001 to 21 percent in 2005.

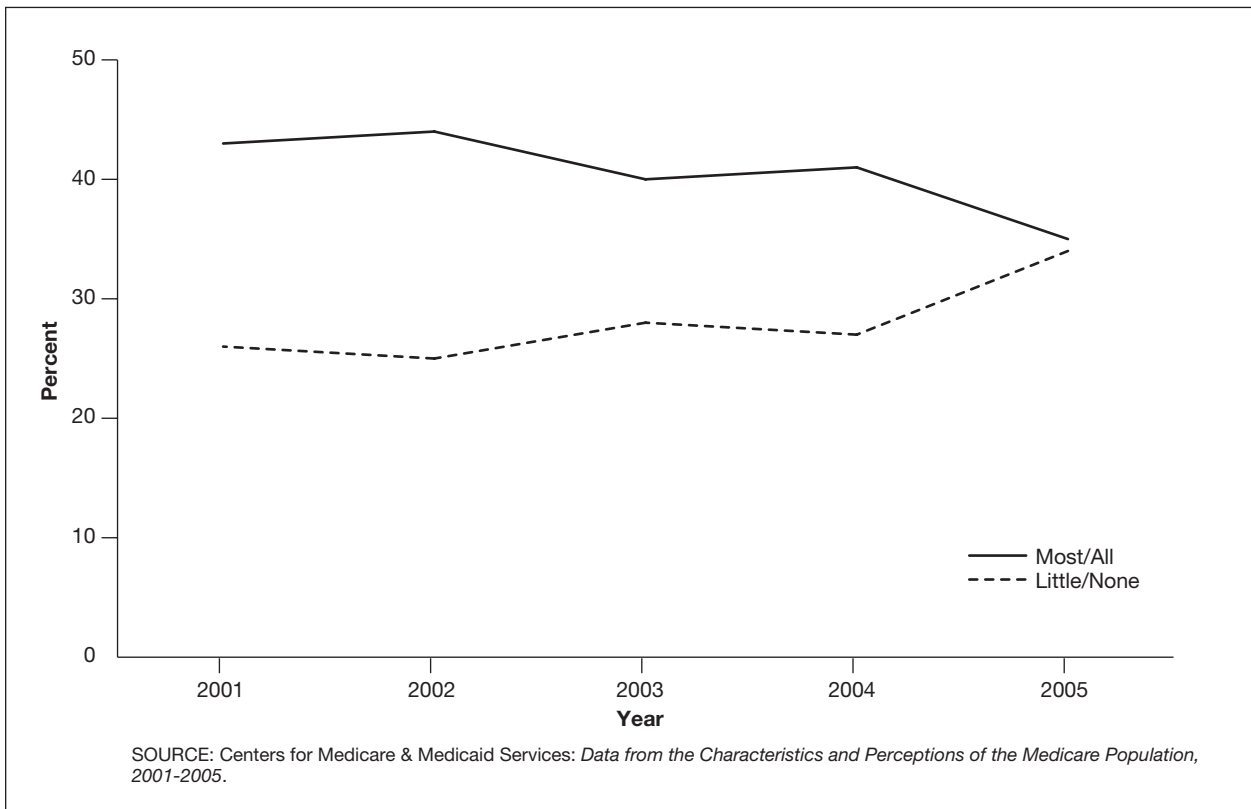
Figure 7
Percent of Community Medicare Beneficiaries Who Had Heart Disease or Hypertension:
2001-2005



- Among community beneficiaries, the reported rate of heart disease decreased while the rate of hypertension rose.
- In 2001, almost one-half of all community beneficiaries reported having heart disease by 2005 only 40 percent reported having heart disease.
- Sixty-two percent of community beneficiaries reported having hypertension in 2005 compared to only 57 percent in 2001.

Figure 8

How Much Medicare Beneficiaries Reported Knowing About the Medicare Program: 2001-2005



- The percent of beneficiaries who reported they knew most or all of the Medicare information they needed decreased from 43 percent in 2001 to 35 percent in 2005.
- The percent of beneficiaries who reported they knew little or none of the Medicare information they needed increased from 26 percent in 2001 to 34 percent in 2005.

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