How Physicians Access and Use the Federal Treatment Guidelines

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Treatment of HIV infection is complex, requiring combination therapy of drugs with different antiretroviral potencies and toxicities. The federal government has developed a series of treatment guidelines, providing a standard of care for managing HIV infection specific to various populations.

The AIDSinfo Web site (**AIDSinfo.nih.gov**) is the primary dissemination point for these guidelines, linking the work of the expert panels to users seeking information. In 2006, AIDSinfo reported that a total of 3,409,112 PDF files of guideline documents were downloaded.

To collect information on guideline users, AIDSinfo posted the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey on guideline pages. From December 2005 through December 2006, a total of 1,245 surveys were completed with physicians ($N = 510$) responding to questions about how frequently they access guideline information and how they use guidelines, as well as offering suggestions for guideline improvement.

Physicians reported using the guidelines to:
- Review the current knowledge on HIV/AIDS (80%).
- Get the latest treatment information (67%).
- Make decisions about patient care (55%).
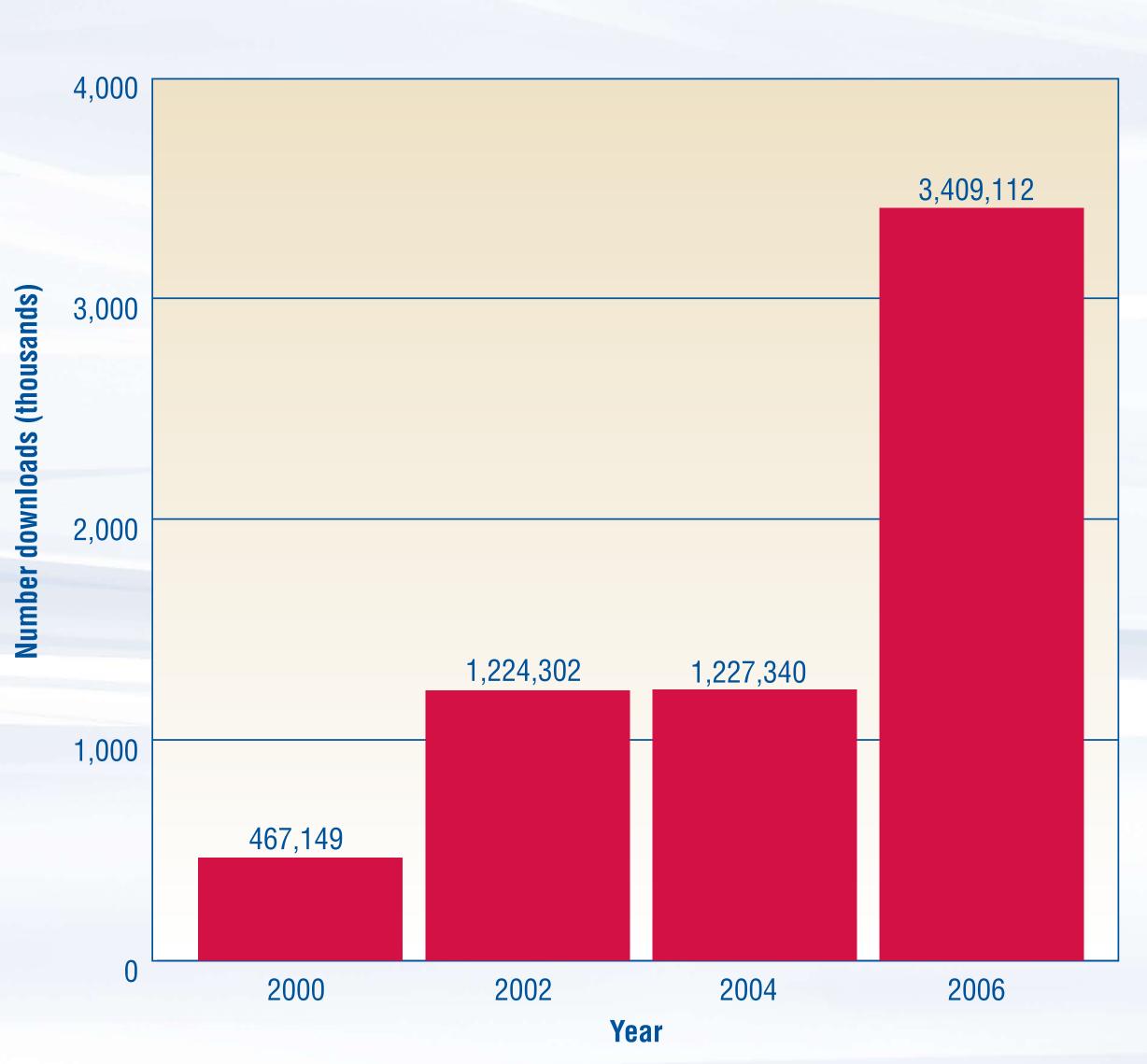- Confirm decisions about patient care (50%).

Physicians also reported using the guidelines for professional development, to develop materials for presentations, and to obtain patient education information.

The frequency of physician visits to the guidelines pages showed a pattern similar to an earlier AIDSinfo online survey (2002) that reported physicians with >50 patients accessing guideline information more frequently than physicians treating fewer patients.

The treatment guidelines serve a role in informing physicians about standards of care, and AIDSinfo is an important service to disseminate those guidelines.

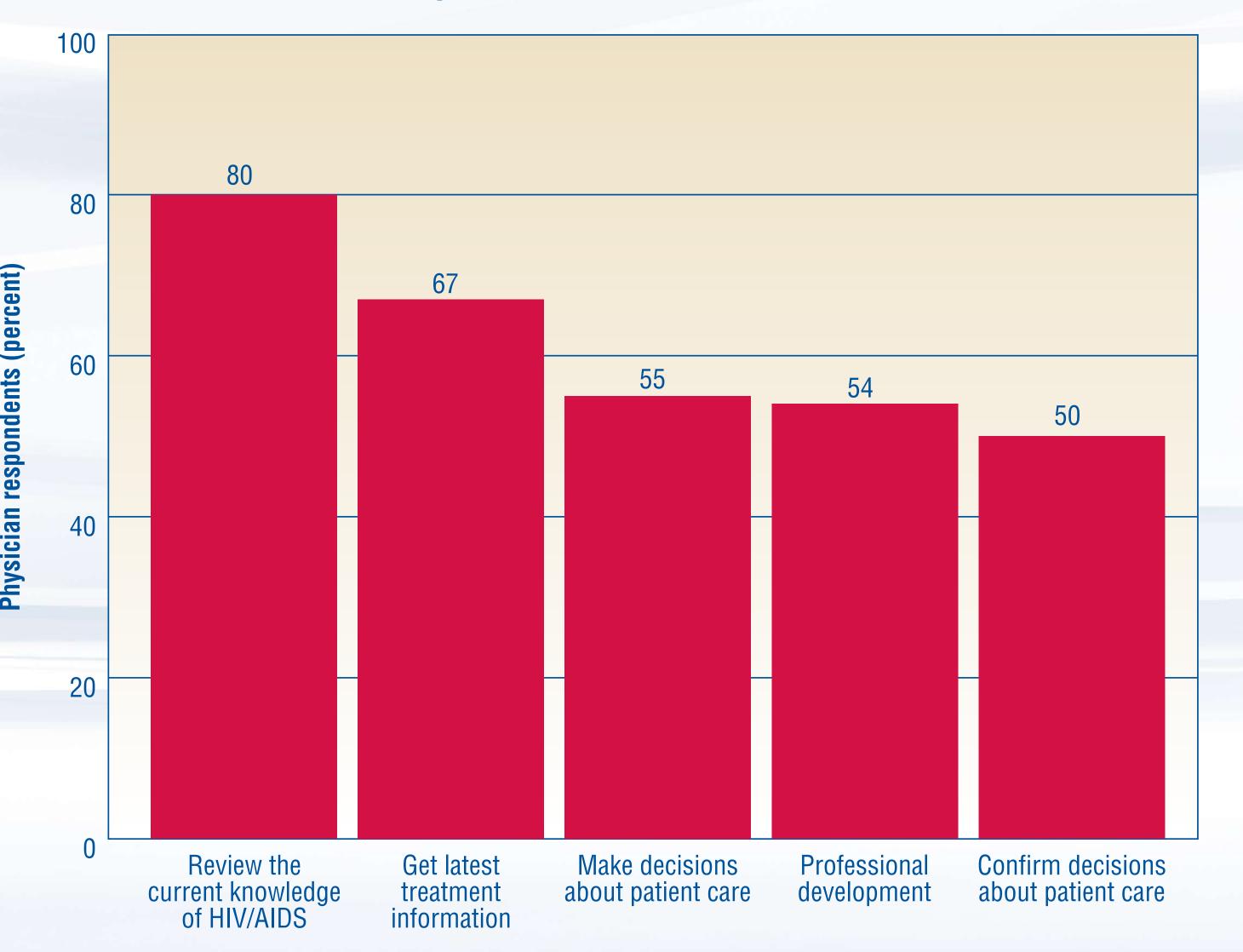## Total Number of Downloads of Federal Treatment Guidelines*
2000–2006

*Adult and Adolescent • Perinatal • Pediatric • Prevention of Opportunistic Infections • Treatment of Opportunistic Infections • Post-Exposure Prophylaxis • Non-occupational Exposure

How Do Physicians Use the Federal Treatment Guidelines?
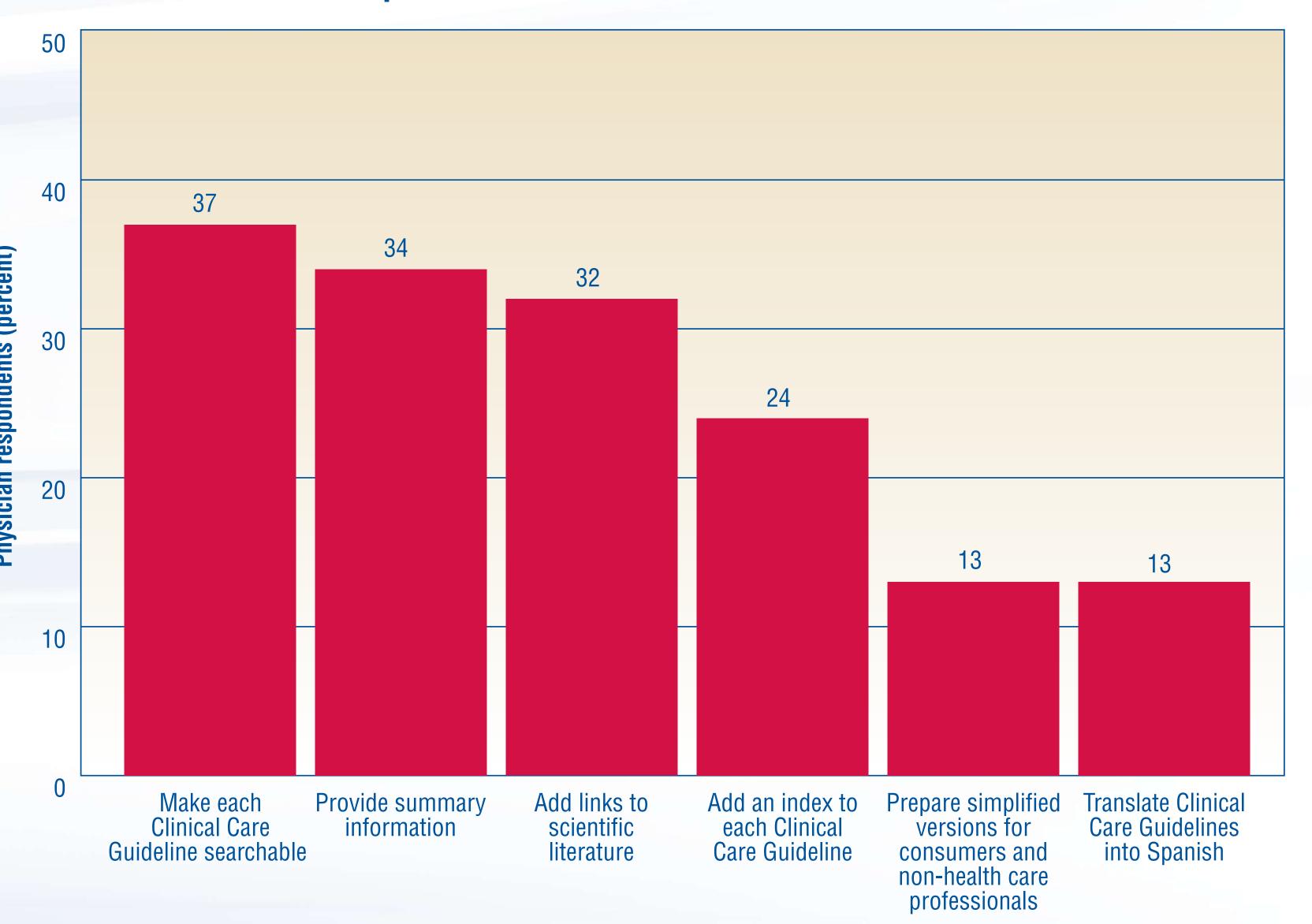Total number of respondents = 510

By learning how doctors use the guidelines, the expert panels can make them more useful in the future.
NOTE: Multiple responses allowed.

What Changes Would Make the Federal Treatment Guidelines More Useful For You?
Total number of respondents = 510

AIDSinfo evaluates user feedback to continuously improve access to the latest treatment information.
NOTE: Multiple responses allowed.

English- and Spanish-Language Fact Sheets
Patient education fact sheets written in non-technical language have been developed based on the guidelines. AIDSinfo also offers fact sheets in Spanish.

Summary

Results from the ACSI survey data indicate that physicians access the federal treatment guidelines from AIDSinfo to stay up to date on the latest information on HIV/AIDS and its treatment as well as to inform their decisions on patient care. Physicians participating in the survey also suggested enhancements—such as making the guidelines searchable—that would improve their access to guideline information.

AIDSinfo has responded to physicians' suggestions for improvements by making the following enhancements available:
- Developing PDF files for PDA wireless technology.
- Linking listed references to PubMed abstracts.

- Developing consumer fact sheets that adapt the technical information into non-technical language. The fact sheets are offered in English and Spanish.

Efforts are currently underway to develop an option for searching guideline documents that provides an enhanced PDF text search as well as a print capability that will make it easier to print a page, a section, or the entire document.

AIDSinfo and its sponsoring agencies are committed to offering new features and enhancements to make it easier for our users to access and use the guidelines.