



Happy New Year to our ACR members!

Our latest newsletter provides a summary of Neiman Health Policy Institute (HPI) accomplishments in 2024, covering publications in the last quarter. You'll see that we've covered a lot of territory — from screening adherence, to reimbursement, to workforce, and even a new risk index for imaging. Our latest set of studies provide new insights, including the promise of mobile mammography to increase breast cancer screening, the negative impact of low Medicaid reimbursement on patient access to imaging and new challenges from the No Surprises Act.

Our **Expert Spotlight** this month focuses on Richard Duszak Jr., MD, FACR — someone likely known to most of our readers. We are grateful to have a continuing productive collaboration with Dr. Duszak, and we have recognized his many contributions to the Neiman HPI with a grant in his name. We are currently soliciting applications for the **Duszak Grant as well as the Neiman Grant** and the application deadline is coming soon — the due date is Tuesday, March 4. I want to highlight the Duszak Grant because it provides the unique opportunity to collaborate with the Neiman HPI in support of a novel, high-value research proposal, including tapping into HPI expertise and resources to conduct the analysis. This is a valuable opportunity for radiologists with important health policy research questions to get answers and publish important findings.

I also want to share new statistics about the traction that HPI research is getting with a national audience. The year 2024 was the strongest period ever for HPI in total audience reached through media and news. In total, 209 print, online and broadcast news reports quoted or cited HPI researchers and reached a total audience of 900 million! Given the strategic importance of increasing the visibility of our research for impacting health policy, this is an important metric, and we are thrilled to see the continuing audience growth.

Summaries of key studies published in the last quarter of 2024 are below. Keep scrolling down for the Expert Spotlight on Dr. Duszak and highlights from two new workforce studies we published together. One study describes the growth in nonphysician provider imaging interpretation in the office setting, and the other reveals a concerning change in the extent to which radiologists are now involved with training residents as their workloads have increased.

You can stay up to date with HPI research and new opportunities or sign up for our newsletter at neimanhpi.org. Get the latest news in real time on [LinkedIn](#), [social platform X](#) and [BlueSky](#).

Elizabeth Rula, PhD
Executive Director, Harvey L. Neiman Health Policy Institute®

Top News

Study Shows Mobile Mammography Reach Is Highest in Underserved Groups With Low Breast Cancer Screening Adherence

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States, making early detection an important step in reducing preventable morbidity and mortality. However, women can face significant hurdles when trying to access facilities that offer mammograms.



A recent HPI study examined factors associated with mobile mammography (MM) utilization among female Medicare beneficiaries and whether MM is associated with increased mammography utilization. The results demonstrate that MM is generally used by women otherwise unlikely to be screened, and thus is complementary to facility-based mammography rather than a substitute for it. Hence, MM could feasibly increase breast cancer screening rates, especially in traditionally underserved communities. This study, published in [Clinical Breast Cancer](#), was based on 2.6 million women with Medicare fee-for-service insurance during the 2004–2021 period.

"Women of color in rural and underserved communities face substantial barriers to accessing breast cancer screening services. Mobile mammography is an innovative and practical solution to address this disparity in cancer care and deliver life-saving screenings and early detection to ensure these women get the critical care they need," explained Bhavika K. Patel, MD, Professor of Radiology, Chair of Research and clinical breast radiologist at the Mayo Clinic Arizona.

Updated Data Tool, the Neiman Imaging Comorbidity Index, Outperforms the Charlson Comorbidity Index in Predicting Advanced Imaging Use

Previously in 2024, HPI researchers published a novel risk-adjustment score — the Neiman Imaging Comorbidity Index (NICI) — predictive of patients' advanced imaging use. Now, these researchers have published more extensive validation of the NICI to test its utility in additional claims datasets and patient populations. This multi-pronged validation, published in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology (JACR®)*, included records from more than 100 million patients across Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance plans.

The results of this external validation showed that the NICI consistently outperformed the commonly used Charlson Comorbidity Index (CCI) in predicting advanced imaging. "Our results show that the NICI is a highly useful, rigorously validated risk-adjustment tool for studying imaging outcomes among insured populations in the U.S.," remarked Casey Pelzl, lead author and Senior Economics and Health Services Analyst at the Neiman Institute. "Moving forward, our research will employ the NICI in place of the CCI to control for a patient's comorbidities when studying imaging outcomes." [Read the summary](#)



Medicaid Patients in States With Higher Medicaid Reimbursement More Likely to Receive Imaging

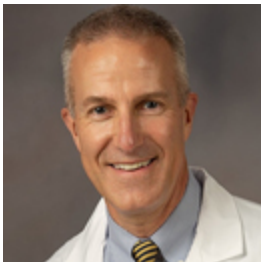
Results of a recent JACR study found that Medicaid patients residing in states with higher Medicaid reimbursement were more likely to receive medical imaging. However, the number of imaging exams for Medicaid patients who underwent imaging did not vary based on reimbursement differences. The study was based on nearly 49 million Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program beneficiaries.

"The implication of our study is that increasing state Medicaid reimbursement is a logical option for improving access to care," said Dr. Rula. "As a safety net program, Medicaid serves low-income Americans and a disproportionate percentage of beneficiaries who are Black or Hispanic. Eliminating Medicaid reimbursement gaps may reduce the healthcare and outcome disparities experienced by these underserved groups." [Read the summary](#)

Neurointerventionalists May Rarely Recover Payment for Out-of-Network Mechanical Thrombectomy Under the No Surprises Act

A new HPI study published in the Journal of Neurointerventional Surgery found that neurointerventionalists have essentially no financially viable access to payment recovery through the U.S. No Surprises Act for out-of-network (OON) thrombectomy claims. "It is financially unwise for a neurointerventionalists to submit OON claims to the Federal Independent Dispute Resolution (IDR) process unless they expect payment recovery will be at least as much as the costs of entering the Federal IDR process," explained author Jonathan Grossberg, MD, Vascular Neurosurgeon and Assistant Professor at Emory Healthcare. [Read the summary](#)

Expert Spotlight



Richard Duszak Jr., MD, FACR, served as the founding CEO of the Neiman HPI and remains an active collaborator with the Institute, particularly on topics related to the radiology workforce. Presently Professor and Chair of Radiology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Dr. Duszak is a dedicated ACR volunteer leader. He currently chairs the ACR Commission for Leadership and Practice Development, where he oversees the ACR Radiology Leadership Institute[®], and served in innumerable leadership roles during his decades of service, including pioneering an all-virtual annual meeting as Council Speaker during the pandemic.

In this issue, we spotlight two new workforce studies that benefitted from Dr. Duszak's deep and broad expertise as a co-investigator and author. "Workforce issues are top of mind for many ACR members, including myself as a department chair. To help our

members, it is critical that we understand the changing landscape of radiology practice. I value the opportunity to collaborate with the HPI team to provide objective evidence to guide the specialty through policy and strategies to ensure patient access to high-quality radiological imaging and intervention,” said Dr. Duszak about the new research.

In January 2025, JACR published an [HPI study](#) coauthored by Duszak focused on growth in image interpretation by non-physician providers (NPPs) – nurse practitioners and physicians assistants. The team found that the share of this work performed and billed by NPPs in the office setting more than doubled from 2013 to 2022. The study examined the characteristics of NPP providers and differences by state, the primary physician specialty of their employment practice and by imaging modality. Their results revealed similar growth in the NPP interpretation share of office-based imaging across all diagnostic imaging modalities.

The observed growth was fueled by a 141% increase in the number of NPP Medicare providers. When the characteristics of NPPs who interpreted imaging were examined compared to those who did not, several differences were evident. “Male NPPs were 61% more likely than female NPPs to interpret imaging, those younger than 55 were 41–43% more likely to interpret imaging than those 65 or older, and those in smaller practices were 2 to 3 times more likely to interpret imaging than those in large practices,” said Dr. Duszak. “With new NPPs entering the workforce at an increasing pace, this age discrepancy suggests that the growth of NPP imaging interpretation could further accelerate, drawing additional attention to huge mismatches in education and training for imaging interpretation when compared with radiologists.”

The other [collaborative study](#) from HPI and Dr. Duszak, also published in the January 2025 JACR, investigated changes in radiologists’ participation in training residents. The study found that, as a percentage of total clinical workload, work that involved resident training dropped from 35.3% in 2008 to 26.3% in 2019. In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the U.S., the teaching share of work dropped further to 24.5%. Over the same period, radiologists’ aggregate workload increased by 80% from 2008 to 2019.

“The national shortage of radiologists has many downstream effects that aren’t yet well understood. Our study indicates that increased workloads are associated with less effort spent training the next generation of radiologists. This change in the teaching landscape indicates a need to critically evaluate the quality and consistency of residency training as radiologists are working harder than ever,” explained Dr. Duszak.

Apply for the Duszak Grant

The Duszak Grant was named in recognition of Richard Duszak Jr., MD, FACR, as a catalyzing force behind the success of the Neiman Health Policy Institute, and his continuing efforts to address critical health policy issues through research, mentorship and training.

Apply by March 4 to work with the HPI research team and their national claims data sources to complete your high-priority policy research study.

[Access grant details and request for applications](#)

Additional New Studies

[Real-World Rates and Risk Factors for Subsequent Treatment With Vertebroplasty or Balloon Kyphoplasty After Initial Vertebral Augmentation: A Retrospective Cohort Study](#), Osteoporosis International

[Patient and Provider Characteristics Associated With Receipt of Image-Guided Interventions for Low Back Pain](#), American Journal of Neuroradiology

[Ranking the Relative Importance of Image Quality Features in CT by Consensus Survey](#), JACR

Upcoming Events

[HPI-AIRP® Healthcare Delivery & Policy Research Course | Virtual | Feb. 10 – March 7](#)

"Highly informative and useful course. It inspired me to further pursue informatics research as one of my career aspirations." — Resident attendee



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