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PHYSICIANS’ VIEWS ON THE TREATMENT OF OTITIS MEDIA
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Otitis media, when untreated, places a child at risk for hearing loss and potential speech-language delays. Because of current concerns about the overuse of antibiotics, it has been suggested that physicians should let otitis media "run its course" without treatment. This study sampled sixty-one physicians in the Fort Wayne area with respect to their preferred treatment of otitis media. Fourteen ear-nose- and throat specialists, twenty-four family practitioners, and twenty-three pediatricians were mailed a survey asking their typical mode of treatment for otitis media and their views about letting the disease run its course without treatment. Thirty-four physicians responded to the survey. All but one used antibiotics as their initial treatment for otitis media. Most physicians reported that letting otitis media "run its course" was too risky to the child’s health. Parental concerns and legal concerns also influenced treatment decisions. Six physicians indicated they were "straddling the fence", waiting for further research on the topic. Many physicians offered suggestions for preventing otitis media, and one provided a research article on the topic. Implications for speech and language development are favorable based on this sample.