

AAMC Estimates Shortage of 46k PCPs by 2025

AAMC just released a new workforce report. The link to the full report is at the end of this email.

Key Points About Primary Care:

There is broad recognition of the central role of primary care in the nation's health care delivery system. Until recently, though, health workforce projections have largely neglected primary care. Our baseline projections produce a greater shortage in primary care than in any other specialty area. In fact, the projected shortage in primary care accounts for more than a third of the total projected shortage in 2025 (37% of the overall physician shortage, or about 46,000 FTE primary care doctors). This is consistent with the primary care projections recently published by Colwill et al, where they expect a shortage of up to 44,000 generalists by 2025.

Integral to discussions of primary care is specialty choice. Fewer USMDs are choosing primary care, many because they are opting for specialties that they perceive as offering 'controllable lifestyles'. Accordingly, the composition of primary care residents has shifted. The move away from primary care residencies among USMDs has been offset by IMGs and Dos. From 2002 to 2006, the number of USMDs in primary care residencies dropped by 2,342, while the number of IMGs and Dos in primary care residencies rose 3,116 and 301, respectively.

A reinvigorated emphasis on primary care could have positive effects in all quarters, from patient outcomes to overall physician demand; but how medical students choose their specialty, what drives them into or away from primary care, is all too inadequately understood. Of course, which physicians constitute the primary care workforce is also inadequately understood. Many specialists provide services that could be called primary care, and some general practitioners have areas of specialization. Substantial indications of a need to develop better means for integrating primary and specialty care also abound. Barriers to such system integrations need to be deconstructed, and an improved understanding of the relationship - at the person level - between the integrated application of basic and specialized knowledge bases developed. Any effort to shed light on specialty choice, the actual scope of the primary care workforce, and integrative arrangements would go far toward improving the delivery of physician services in the U.S., especially since the greatest projected shortage is, in fact, for primary care.

Universal health care coverage could add 4 percent to overall demand for physicians; this would increase the projected physician shortfall by 31,000 physicians (25 percent).

The full report can be found here

https://services.aamc.org/Publications/showfile.cfm?file=version122.pdf&prd_id=244&rv_id=299&pdf_id=122

If you have any questions on these or other topics, please contact Shuan Tomlinson at 800-338-2746 ext. 4547 or by email at stomlinson@acponline.org.

To access recent and past state health policy reports go to the State Health Policy section on the Chapter Leadership Network (CLN) website or click on:
http://www.acponline.org/advocacy/state_policy/reports/

November 11, 2008