



## *The Physicians' Perspective: Medical Practice in 2008*

### **Key Findings**

#### ***The Doctor Shortage***

- An overwhelming majority of physicians – 78% – believe there is a shortage of primary care doctors in the United States today
- 49% of physicians – more than 150,000 doctors nationwide – said that over the next three years they plan to reduce the number of patients they see or stop practicing entirely. In that same time frame:
  - 11%, or more than 35,000 doctors nationwide, said they plan to retire
  - 13% said they plan to seek a job in a non-clinical healthcare setting, which would remove them from active patient care
  - 20% said they will cut back on patients seen
  - 10% said they will work part-time
- 60% of doctors would not recommend medicine as a career to young people

#### ***Paperwork***

- 63% of doctors said non-clinical paperwork has caused them to spend less time with their patients
- 94% said time they devote to non-clinical paperwork in the last three years has increased

#### ***Government***

- “Declining reimbursement” rated highest on list of issues physicians identify as impediments to the delivery of patient care in their practices, followed by “demands on physician time”
  - 82% said their practices would be “unsustainable” if proposed cuts to Medicare reimbursement were made
  - 65% said Medicaid reimbursement is less than their cost of providing care and 36% said Medicare provides reimbursement that is less than their cost of providing care
  - Over 33% of physicians have closed their practices to Medicaid patients and 12% have closed their practices to Medicare patients

#### ***Finances***

- Only 17% of physicians rated the financial position of their practices as “healthy and profitable”
- If they had the financial means, 45% of doctors would retire today

### ***Morale***

- “Patient relationships” rated highest on the list of things physicians find *satisfying* about medicine, while “reimbursement issues” and “managed care issues” rated the highest on the list of issues physicians find *unsatisfying* about medicine
- Only 6% of physicians described the professional morale of their colleagues as “positive.” 42% of physicians said the professional morale of their colleagues is either “poor” or “very low”
- 78% of physicians said medicine is either “no longer rewarding” or “less rewarding”
- 76% of physicians said they are either at “full capacity” or “overextended and overworked”

### **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

*“The Physicians’ Perspective: Medical Practice in 2008” survey was conducted between May and July 2008 by physician search and consulting firm Merritt, Hawkins & Associates. It was mailed to 270,000 primary care doctors and more than 50,000 specialists – virtually every physician engaged in active medical practice in the United States today. The total number of responses received was 11,950. According to an independent analysis by Chad Autry PhD, Professor of Statistics at Texas Christian University, the margin of error for this survey is less than one percent.*

### **ABOUT THE PHYSICIANS’ FOUNDATION**

*The Physicians’ Foundation seeks to advance the work of practicing physicians and to improve the quality of healthcare for all Americans. The Foundation is unique in its commitment to working with physicians nationwide to create a more efficient and equitable healthcare system. The Physicians’ Foundation pursues its mission through a variety of activities including grantmaking and research. Since 2005, the Foundation has awarded more than \$22 million in multi-year grants. The Physicians’ Foundation was founded in 2003 through settlement of a class-action lawsuit brought by physicians and medical associations against private third-party payors. Additional information about The Physicians’ Foundation is available online at [www.physiciansfoundation.org](http://www.physiciansfoundation.org).*