

**For Immediate Release:**

**SURVEY: ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS TOP LIST  
OF MOST RECRUITED DOCTORS**

**Radiologists Fall to Second After Three Years in Top Spot**

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IRVING, TEXAS – Orthopedic surgeons have surpassed radiologists as the mostly highly recruited physicians nationwide, according to a new survey by Merritt, Hawkins & Associates, a national physician search and consulting firm based in Irving, Texas.

The firm's 11<sup>th</sup> annual Review of Physician Recruitment Incentives examines the 2,594 physician search assignments it conducted in 47 states during the period ranging from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004. The survey indicates which types of physicians were the most highly recruited by Merritt, Hawkins & Associates' hospital and medical group clients and the average income offers made to recruit them. For the three previous years beginning in 2000, the firm conducted more searches for radiologists than for any other type of physician. This year, orthopedic surgeons supplanted radiologists at the top spot, a reflection of national trends, say Merritt, Hawkins & Associates executives.

"The recruitment of radiologists reached a fever pitch in the last several years," notes Joseph Hawkins, chief executive officer of the firm. "The fever has broken, but demand for radiologists and other specialists remains very strong."

The recruiting crunch in radiology was a result of the increasing use of diagnostic imaging techniques, according to Hawkins, combined with the retirement of older radiologists and a decrease in the 1990s in the number of medical graduates specializing in radiology. While demand for radiologists remains high, Hawkins indicates that many hospitals and medical groups addressed their need for radiologists in the last several years and now are focusing on other areas that may have been neglected, orthopedic surgery in particular.

Hawkins also points to population growth among the elderly to explain the surging demand for orthopedic surgeons. He notes that a National Center for Health Statistics study indicates that the rate of inpatient surgery for people 65 and older is three times higher than that of the general population.

“Older people today want to maintain an active lifestyle, and often that means knee, hip, back or other forms of orthopedic surgery,” Hawkins observes. “But demand for specialists in most other surgical specialties also is increasing across the board.”

Merritt, Hawkins & Associates’ top ten most recruited medical specialties for 2003/04, and the average income offered to recruit them, are as follows:

Most recruited specialties	Average income offered
Orthopedic surgery	\$330,000
Radiology	\$336,000
Cardiology	\$292,000
Family practice	\$146,000
Internal medicine	\$152,000
General surgery	\$248,000
Gastroenterology	\$250,000
Obstetrics/Gynecology	\$242,000
Anesthesiology	\$300,000
Urology	\$294,000

The survey also indicates that signing bonuses were offered to physicians in 50% of all searches Merritt, Hawkins & Associates conducted in 2003/04, up from 36% the previous year.

A free copy of the survey can be obtained by calling Merritt, Hawkins & Associates at 800-876-0500 or by visiting [www.merrithawkins.com](http://www.merrithawkins.com).