

For Immediate Release:

**SURVEY: HALF OF OLDER PHYSICIANS
TO SEEK CAREER ALTERNATIVES**

Doctor Shortages May Be Magnified By “Physician Flight”

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IRVING, TEXAS – Over half of physicians between the ages of 50 to 65 are planning to retire, seek non-clinical jobs, or significantly reduce the number of patients they see in the next one to three years, according to a new survey. The survey, conducted by Merritt, Hawkins & Associates, a national physician search and consulting firm based in Irving, Texas, suggests that the flight of older physicians from traditional patient care practices could greatly exacerbate ongoing physician shortages.

“Traditionally, physicians in their fifties and early sixties have been the work horses of medicine,” notes Joseph Hawkins, chief executive officer of Merritt, Hawkins & Associates. “If these physicians stop seeing patients, millions of patient visits will have to be absorbed by an already limited number of doctors.”

The survey indicates that 8% of physicians between 50 and 65 plan to retire in the next one to three years, 10% plan to seek non-patient care medical positions, 3% plan to seek jobs outside of medicine, 6% plan to work on a temporary basis, 17% plan to close their practices to new patients or significantly reduce their workloads, and 7% plan to seek other non-clinical career alternatives. Each of these options would limit patient access to physicians 50 or older, who comprise 38% of all doctors, according to the American Medical Association. Over 255,000 physicians are between the ages of 50 and 65, the AMA reports.

Younger doctors not as hard working

The survey also indicates that many senior physicians believe that physicians coming out of training today are not as dedicated or hard working as are older doctors. Sixty-four percent of physicians surveyed indicated that physicians coming out of training today are less dedicated and hard working than physicians who came out of training 20 to 30 years ago. About 30% of physicians indicated that doctors coming out of training today are just as dedicated and hard working as physicians who came out of training 20 to 30 years ago. Not a single physician surveyed indicated that physicians coming out of training

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today are more dedicated and hard working than physicians who came out of training 20 to 30 years ago.

“There is a pervasive cultural rift between many Baby Boom doctors and Generation X doctors,” Hawkins observes. “Whether valid or not, many older physicians see themselves as more wedded to medicine than are younger doctors.”

The survey suggests that disillusionment among experienced physicians runs deep. Over 50% of physicians surveyed indicated that they would not choose medicine as a career if they were starting out today. Only 36% of physicians indicated that they would recommend medicine as a career to their children or to young people. On a somewhat more positive note, about half of physicians surveyed indicated they believe that the quality of health care in the United States generally has improved in the last 20 years, while 33% indicated that quality of health care has generally declined.

The survey was mailed to 5,000 physicians between the ages of 50 to 65 in 13 medical specialties practicing in all 50 states. Merritt, Hawkins & Associates received 436 completed responses for a response rate of 8.7 percent.

For a free copy of the survey, call Merritt, Hawkins & Associates at (800) 876-0500, or visit www.merrithawkins.com.