



For Immediate Release

5/5/09

**SURVEY SHOWS WAIT TIMES FOR
DOCTOR APPOINTMENTS IN TOP U.S. CITIES**

Waits Longest in Boston, Shortest in Atlanta

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IRVING, TX – Need to see a family physician, dermatologist or an ob/gyn? Get in line, because it could take months to schedule an appointment, according to a new survey.

Conducted by Merritt Hawkins & Associates, a national physician search and consulting firm, the survey of 1,162 medical offices tracks the average time needed to schedule a doctor appointment in 15 large metropolitan areas. The survey reports average doctor appointment wait times in five different medical specialties: cardiology, dermatology, obstetrics/gynecology, orthopedic surgery and family practice.

Boston is experiencing the longest average doctor appointment wait times overall of the 15 metro markets examined in the survey: 70 days to see an obstetrician/gynecologist, 63 days to see a family physician, 54 days to see a dermatologist, 40 days to see an orthopedic surgeon, and 21 days to see a cardiologist. Philadelphia and Los Angeles are next on the list, with average doctor appointment wait times exceeding 45 days in some specialties, followed by Houston, Washington, D.C., San Diego, Minneapolis, Dallas, Miami, New York, Denver, Portland, Seattle, Detroit and Atlanta. Physician appointment wait times tracked in the survey varied from as little as one day to as long as one year.

“Finding an available physician can be challenging today, even in large urban areas where most doctors practice,” notes Mark Smith, president of Merritt Hawkins & Associates.

Massachusetts is a case in point, according to Smith. In 2006 the state implemented a healthcare reform plan that mandated coverage for all residents, effectively insuring hundreds of thousands of previously uninsured patients. Demand for doctors greatly increased, and even though Massachusetts has more physicians per population than any other state, patients are encountering increasing difficulty in scheduling physician appointments, says Smith. Should access to healthcare be expanded through a national reform plan, Smith believes accessing physicians would be even more problematic for many patients nationwide.

The survey also tracks which medical offices are accepting Medicaid as a form of payment. Minneapolis was found to have the highest rate of Medicaid acceptance at 82 percent, Dallas the lowest at 39 percent. The overall Medicaid acceptance rate for all metro markets was 55 percent. Many physicians are not accepting Medicaid because it often pays less than what it costs physicians to provide care, according to Smith.

“Merely having medical coverage does not always ensure access to a physician,” Smith observes. “Many doctors simply can no longer afford to see Medicaid patients.”

Complete results of Merritt Hawkins & Associates 2009 Survey of Physician Appointment Wait Times can be accessed at www.merrithawkins.com.

About Merritt Hawkins & Associates

Merritt Hawkins & Associates is the largest physician search and consulting firm in the United States and is an AMN Healthcare company. AMN Healthcare is the nation’s largest healthcare staffing organization and is the largest in all four of its business lines; travel nurse staffing, locum tenens staffing, physician permanent placement and allied healthcare professional staffing.