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NEW WHITE PAPER POINTS TO EMERGING SHORTAGE OF PHYSICIAN SPECIALISTS

Physician Shortages Not Confined to Primary Care

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Dallas, TX -- While the shortage of primary care physicians has been widely noted by healthcare policy experts and academics for years, what often is overlooked is that the U.S. also is facing a growing shortage of medical specialists.

That is the assertion of a new white paper produced by Merritt Hawkins, the nation's leading physician search and consulting firm and a company of AMN Healthcare (NYSE: AMN). Entitled, [Physician Supply Considerations: The Emerging Shortage of Medical Specialists](#), the white paper examines factors accelerating demand for medical specialists and those factors inhibiting supply. It concludes that many types of surgical, diagnostic and internal medicine specialists will soon be in as short supply as are primary care doctors such as family physicians.

"The notion that we should be training more primary care physicians while maintaining or reducing the supply of specialists is a grave miscalculation," said Mark Smith, president of Merritt Hawkins. "We should be training more of both types of physicians."

The white paper notes the dramatic effect population aging will have on demand for medical specialists, including the fact that seniors 65 or older comprise 14 percent of the population but account for 34 percent of inpatient procedures and 37.4 percent of diagnostic treatments and tests. The authors state that, "It is primarily specialists such as cardiologists, orthopedic surgeons, neurologists, rheumatologists, pulmonologists, vascular surgeons and many others who care for the declining health and organ systems of elderly patients, and a growing number will be needed as the population ages." Specialists themselves are, on average, generally older than are primary care doctors, and a wave of specialist physician retirements is imminent, according to the white paper.

The white paper cites Merritt Hawkins' data regarding the types of search assignments it conducts for hospitals and other healthcare facilities to demonstrate growing demand for medical specialists. It also cites Merritt Hawkins' research indicating that 80 percent of specialists currently are overextended or are at capacity, while only 20 percent have time to see more patients or take on new duties. Citing a 2017 Merritt Hawkins' survey, the white paper notes that the time it takes to schedule appointments with medical specialists such as cardiologists, dermatologists, orthopedic surgeons and obstetricians/gynecologists has increased significantly since 2014.

"In certain medical specialties, vascular surgery being just one, there are only a few thousand physicians, while patients with the conditions they treat number in the tens of millions," said Smith. "The data indicate that medical specialists will be in increasingly short supply, and this should be a serious concern for healthcare policy makers and the public."

Additional Merritt Hawkins white papers and surveys can be accessed at www.merritthawkins.com or by calling 800-876-0500.

About Merritt Hawkins

Merritt Hawkins is the leading physician and advanced practitioner search and consulting firm in the United States and is a company of AMN Healthcare (amnhealthcare.com) the nation's largest healthcare workforce solutions company.

About AMN Healthcare

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