

The Physicians Foundation's Sixth Biennial Survey Finds Physicians are Pessimistic About the Future of the Profession as Burnout Rates Continue to Rise

Research Examines the Impact of Poverty on Healthcare Outcomes, Professional Morale, Practice Patterns, Career Plans and Perspectives of Today's Physicians

BOSTON, September 18, 2018 — [The Physicians Foundation](#), a nonprofit organization that seeks to advance the work of practicing physicians and helps them facilitate the delivery of healthcare to patients, has released the findings of its 2018 survey of U.S. physicians, revealing the impact of several factors driving physicians to reassess their careers. The new survey, administered by Merritt Hawkins, includes responses from almost 9,000 physicians across the country and underscores the overall impact of excessive regulatory / insurer requirements, loss of clinical autonomy and challenges with electronic health record (EHR) design / interoperability on physician attitudes toward their medical practice environment and overall dissatisfaction – all of which have led to professional burnout.

78 Percent of Physicians Have Experienced Burnout in their Medical Practices

Survey results show that one of the chief culprits contributing to physician burnout is the frustration physicians feel with the inefficiency of electronic health records (EHRs).

“The perceptions of thousands of physicians in The Physicians Foundation’s latest survey reflect front-line observations of our healthcare system and its impact on all of us, and it’s sobering,” said Gary Price, MD, President of the Foundation. “Their responses provide important insights into many critical issues. The career plans and practice pattern trends revealed in this survey – some of which are a result of burnout – will likely have a significant effect on our physician workforce, and ultimately, everyone’s access to care.”

88 Percent of Physicians Have Reported that Some, Many or All of their Patients Are Affected by Social Determinants

Conditions such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and addictions all pose a serious impediment to their health, well-being and eventual health outcomes. Only one percent of physicians reported that none of their patients had such conditions.

“It is distressing that such a high number of patients are dealing with one or more social situations that are detrimental to their health,” said Walker Ray, MD, Chair of the Foundation’s Research Committee. “These challenges directly impact a physician’s ability to deliver effective care, and the cost implication of these issues is enormous. Such social determinants as they relate to healthcare have been a critical focus of the Foundation for years, and we have made concerted efforts to address these vital issues with partners across the U.S.”

Over 50 Percent Don't Believe Value-Based Compensation Improves the Healthcare System

Value-based compensation is directly connected to the overall dissatisfaction problem, which is tied to metrics such as EHR use, cost controls and readmission rates, etc. A total of 56.8 percent of physicians who received such compensation (47.1 percent of them did) did not believe that such metrics improve the quality of care or help to reduce costs. As one responding physician put it: "We are no longer in the business of healthcare delivery, we are in the business of 'measures' delivery."

79 Percent Find Most Satisfaction in Patient Relationships

Consistent with the finding of past biennial Physician Foundation surveys, 79 percent of physicians report that patient relationships continue to be their greatest source of professional satisfaction while intellectual stimulation was a distant second at 55 percent.

Only 10 Percent of Physicians Feel the Ability to Impact the Healthcare System

Ten percent of physicians believe they have a good or great ability to significantly influence the healthcare system.

Tim Norbeck, CEO of The Physicians Foundation, noted that, "Practicing physicians are the leaders of our healthcare system, yet their voices are often not heard. Our survey found that over 60 percent of physicians feel they have very little ability to influence the healthcare system. Our goal at The Physicians Foundation is to give physicians a voice and to ultimately change this paradigm." Norbeck continued, "We hope policy makers, healthcare influencers, media and other stakeholders will use the findings of our survey as a valuable resource to better understand the underlying challenges facing our healthcare system and, as a result, will formulate effective policies to advance the health and interests of patients."

Additional Key Findings

- 18.5 percent of physicians now practice some form of telemedicine
- Only 31 percent of physicians are in private practice, down from 48 percent in 2014
- 80 percent of physicians report being at full capacity or being overextended
- 40 percent of physicians plan to either retire in the next one to three years or cut back on hours – up from 36 percent in 2016
- 46 percent of physicians plan to change career paths
- 69 percent of physicians are prescribing fewer pain medications in response to the opioid crisis
- 31 percent of patients do not follow physician treatment plans

To access the full survey report and to learn more about The Physicians Foundation, visit www.physiciansfoundation.org

About The Physicians Foundation

The Physicians Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that seeks to advance the work of practicing physicians and helps them facilitate the delivery of healthcare to patients. It pursues its mission through a variety of activities including grant-making, research, white papers and policy studies. Since 2005, the Foundation has awarded numerous multi-year grants totaling more than \$50 million. In addition, the Foundation focuses on the following core areas: physician leadership, physician practice trends, physician shortage issues, and the impact of healthcare reform on physicians and patients. As the healthcare system in America continues to evolve, The Physicians Foundation is steadfast in its determination to strengthen the physician-patient relationship and assist physicians in sustaining their

medical practices in today's practice environment. For more information, visit www.PhysiciansFoundation.org.

About Merritt Hawkins

Merritt Hawkins is a leading physician search and consulting firm in the United States and is a company of AMN Healthcare (NYSE: AMN). For more information, visit www.merrithawkins.com.

Press Contacts:

G&S Business Communications for The Physicians Foundation
Alyssa Gustafsson
agustafsson@cooperkatz.com
917-595-3063

Merritt Hawkins
Phillip Miller
Phil.Miller@amnhealthcare.com
469-524-1420