**New Research Confirms Looming Physician Shortage**

*Shortages Particularly Acute in Specialties Most Needed by an Aging Population*

**Washington, D.C., April 5, 2016**—Under every combination of scenarios modeled, the United States will face a shortage of physicians over the next decade, according to a physician workforce [report [https://www.aamc.org/contentblob/91462/3/pdf/data.gif](https://www.aamc.org/download/458082/data/2016_complexities_of_supply_and_demand_projections.pdf)](https://www.aamc.org/download/458082/data/2016_complexities_of_supply_and_demand_projections.pdf" \t "_blank)released today by the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges). The projections show a shortage ranging between 61,700 and 94,700, with a significant shortage showing among many surgical specialties.

The study, conducted by the Life Science division of the global information company IHS Inc., is an update to a 2015 report prepared on behalf of the AAMC and reflects feedback from the health care research community, as well as the most recent workforce data.

“These updated projections confirm that the physician shortage is real, it’s significant, and the nation must begin to train more doctors now if patients are going to be able to receive the care they need when they need it in the near future,” said AAMC President and CEO Darrell G. Kirch, MD.

The report aggregates the shortages in four broad categories: primary care, medical specialties, surgical specialties, and other specialties. By 2025, the study estimates a shortfall of between 14,900 and 35,600 primary care physicians. Non-primary care specialties are expected to experience a shortfall of between 37,400 and 60,300 physicians.

These findings are largely consistent with the 2015 report. In particular, the supply of surgical specialists is expected to decline, just as demand for physicians is growing. The study also finds that the numbers of new primary care physicians and other medical specialists are not keeping pace with the health care demands of a growing and aging population.

As one example of how patient demand will surpass physician supply, Kirch cited that in 2014, 45 states had fewer psychiatrists relative to their populations than they had in 2009, despite more than 43 million adults in the United States reporting a mental illness. “As a psychiatrist, I have seen firsthand what it means for patients not to be able to receive the care they need. These projected shortages are very troubling and only reinforce the importance of ensuring that all patients have access to health care for their physical and mental well-being,” he said.

In addition to projected shortages of psychiatrists and primary care physicians, shortages of general and vascular surgeons will also be a serious problem, particularly for older patients who require two to three times the amount of specialty care to treat chronic conditions and age-related illnesses.

As the U.S. population ages, so too does the physician workforce, with one-third of physicians now over the age of 55, noted Kirch. “More physicians retiring over the next decade also will create challenges for patients who need access to health care,” said Kirch.

For the first time, the 2016 report includes a special analysis of the needs of underserved populations. These data show that if underserved patients had barriers to utilization removed, the United States would need up to 96,000 doctors today to meet patient needs.

“When you consider all the people who do not utilize health care—despite their need—because of financial, cultural, social, or geographic barriers, the physician shortage is actually much bigger. We are very concerned about equity in patient utilization of care and how we can address it going forward,” Kirch said.

To help alleviate the shortage, the AAMC supports a multipronged solution, which includes innovations in care delivery, better use of technology, and increased federal support for an additional 3,000 new residency positions a year over the next five years. Medical schools have done their part to increase the overall number of physicians by expanding their class sizes, and now Congress must approve a modest increase in federal support for new doctor training if the United States is to increase its overall number of physicians, according to Kirch. After graduating from medical school, all new MDs must complete a residency to be able to care for patients independently.

“We believe this is a measured approach to deal with a problem that has the potential to affect every American. It strikes a balance between our nation’s budget constraints and what medical schools and teaching hospitals believe is our responsibility to meet the needs of patients,” said Kirch. “Because it can take up to 10 years to train a doctor, our nation needs to act now.”

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The Association of American Medical Colleges is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 147 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 80 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC serves the leaders of America’s medical schools and teaching hospitals and their nearly 160,000 faculty members, 83,000 medical students, and 115,000 resident physicians. Additional information about the AAMC and its member medical schools and teaching hospitals is available at [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org/).

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