

## MEETING THE STATE'S HEALTHCARE NEEDS

In a country dealing with health issues ranging from cancer and heart disease to obesity and mental illness, one critical solution remains unavailable for many Americans, especially those in rural areas and underserved populations: access to primary care physicians.

This national need is acute and growing. It is especially pronounced in Washington state.

The United States averages about 26 physicians per 10,000 individuals, and the ratio is about the same in the state of Washington. But a closer look reveals that 15 of the state's 39 counties average fewer than 10 physicians per 10,000 residents. These residents live mostly in rural areas, where hospitals and clinics often struggle to attract doctors to their communities. The situation is predicted to worsen with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, as baby boomers age, as the number of doctors retiring increases, and as the number of new doctors remains relatively low.

Washington is the 13th most populous state in the country, yet it is tied for 26th nationally for the number of publicly funded medical schools offering a doctorate of medicine (one). The average number of medical schools for the 12 states with larger populations than Washington is six. Massachusetts, with a population slightly less than Washington, has four.

Most states have multiple medical schools. In fact, other states with smaller populations than

Washington but more medical schools include Connecticut, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Washington provides 120 seats for in-state medical students. Missouri—with a population similar to Washington—provides approximately 500 seats.

Our state's population has doubled in the last 40 years. Yet the number of medical students educated in Washington has barely increased. To reach the national average ratio of medical students to total population, the state would need to enroll 440 medical students each year. That means Washington would need to enroll an additional 320 in-state medical school students annually.

Many cities with populations smaller than Spokane are home to medical schools: Mobile, Ala.; Loma Linda, Calif.; New Haven, Conn.; Farmington, Conn.; North Haven, Conn.; Tallahassee, Fla.; Boca Raton, Fla.; Macon, Ga.; Springfield, Ill.; Maywood, Ill.; Shreveport, La.; Worcester, Mass.; Ann Arbor, Mich.; Rochester, Mich.; Kalamazoo, Mich.; Rochester, Minn.; Columbia, Mo.; Albany, N.Y.; Hempstead, N.Y.; Valhalla, N.Y.; Stony Brook, N.Y.; Greenville, N.C.; Chapel Hill, N.C.; Dayton, Ohio; Rootstown, Ohio; Scranton, Pa.; Hershey, Pa.; Charleston, S.C.; Johnson City, Tenn.; College Station, Tex.; Galveston, Tex.; Roanoke, Va.; Charlottesville, Va.; and Huntington, W.Va.

## WSU HEALTH SCIENCES: READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP

WSU has proudly participated in the University of Washington's Washington-Wyoming-Alaska-Montana-Idaho medical education program, known as "WWAMI," since its inception in 1971. Establishing a separate accredited medical school at WSU is a natural evolution of the WWAMI model and enhances the program's ability to serve all of the states involved, but especially Washington.

WSU has long been a leader in the health sciences, producing more pharmacists and nurses for the state and region than any other school. In 2010, the Washington State Board of Regents designated WSU Spokane as the university's statewide health sciences campus. That designation reflected a longtime strategic partnership with the local community. WSU has worked with Spokane's business, healthcare, and nonprofit leaders for 25 years to establish the Spokane campus as the center of health sciences education, research, and outreach in eastern Washington. That vision has delivered remarkable results.

Organizationally, the College of Pharmacy has moved from Pullman to Spokane to join the College of Nursing. Recently, the WSU Faculty Senate approved a new College of Medical Sciences to be based in Spokane. The synergy created by co-locating the three entities will galvanize the team-based healthcare approach that WSU advocates for its students.

The facilities and expertise also are in place to support a new medical school at WSU Spokane. A new, state-of-the-art Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Sciences Building was completed in December 2013. It features cutting-edge classrooms, laboratories, and

a simulation suite for students to practice their clinical skills. The campus also houses WSU's nationally recognized Sleep and Performance Research Center, a growing medical research portfolio, and the Speech and Hearing Sciences program.

Industry partnerships and community support for WSU's health sciences enterprise remain strong in Spokane and beyond.

A prime example is the recent success of a new Spokane Teaching Health Center consortium that includes Empire Health Foundation, Providence Health Care, and WSU Spokane. The group recently won a \$900,000 appropriation from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration to fund six new medical residency slots beginning July 1, 2014, with the opportunity to apply for additional funding support up to \$2.7 million and 18 residency slots.

An economic impact study completed in 2010 by Tripp-Umbach, a leading expert on the analysis of health science campuses and medical colleges, found that development of the downtown Spokane campus as a health sciences-focused enterprise would drive growth in the regional healthcare sector, with an eventual statewide economic impact of \$2.1 billion per year. Of that, \$1.6 billion in economic impact would be felt in eastern Washington.

Continued growth in the health sciences enterprise at the campus will spur pharmaceutical companies, medical device makers, health care analysts, and bioscience innovators to locate in Spokane and form partnerships with the burgeoning campus.

For additional details: [medicine.wsu.edu](http://medicine.wsu.edu).