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2020 Physician Specialty Data Report

Executive Summary

Association of
American Medical Colleges

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This publication provides detailed statistics about active physicians and physicians in training in the specialties with the largest numbers of active physicians in the United States (i.e., specialties with more than 2,500 active physicians). The *2020 Physician Specialty Data Report*, updated from the 2018 edition, provides the most current data available about the physician workforce across specialties in a series of figures and tables.

The report is divided into two sections:

Section 1: Active Physicians. This section provides data on active physicians practicing in the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico who are in the 47 most reported specialties. Data include the number of physicians by specialty; the number of people per active physician by specialty; age, gender, and type of medical degree by specialty; in-state graduate medical education (GME) retention by specialty; and percentage change in the number of active physicians by specialty (2014-2019).

Section 2: Residents and Fellows. This section presents data on physicians in Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) residencies and fellowship programs for the 47 most reported specialties. Data include the number of residents and fellows by specialty, gender, and type of medical degree by specialty, and percentage change in the number of residents and fellows by specialty (2014-2019).

Primary Data Sources

- The 2020 American Medical Association (AMA) Physician Masterfile (data as of Dec. 31, 2019) provided the data on active physicians. The AMA Physician Masterfile data on physicians are updated annually from a variety of sources, including a survey of physicians.
- U.S. Census Bureau population estimates were used in calculations of the number of people per active physician. (Refer to Figure 1.2 and Table 1.2.)
- GME Track[®], a resident database and tracking system, provided the data on residents and fellows. The Resident Survey in GME Track is an annual survey sponsored by AMA and the AAMC; it typically receives a response rate of about 94%.

Key Findings — Active Physicians

- In 2019, the specialties with the largest numbers of active physicians were the primary care specialties of internal medicine (120,171 physicians), family medicine/general practice (118,198), and pediatrics (60,618). (Refer to Table 1.1.)

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- In 2019, more than one-third (36.3%) of the active physician workforce in the United States was female. Percentages of females in the 47 top specialties ranged from a high of 64.3% in pediatrics to a low of 5.8% in orthopedic surgery. (Refer to Table 1.3.)
- In 2019, 44.9% of active physicians in the United States were age 55 or older. Percentages of this age group in individual specialties ranged from 91.3% in pulmonary disease¹ to 8.3% in sports medicine. (Refer to Table 1.4.)
- The specialties with the highest percentages of active physicians practicing in the same state where they trained were child and adolescent psychiatry (57.6%), family medicine/general practice (56.4%), and psychiatry (55.7%). The specialties with the lowest percentages of active physicians practicing in the same state where they trained were sports medicine (orthopedic surgery) (26.5%), thoracic surgery (29.4%), and neurological surgery (33.5%). (Refer to Table 1.8.)
- The five-year period from 2014 to 2019 saw remarkable growth in some specialties, particularly sports medicine, which grew by 55.3%, from 1,865 to 2,897. Other specialties decreased in numbers, including pulmonary disease (-10.6%)¹ and anatomic/clinical pathology (-7.03%). (Refer to Table 1.9.)

Key Findings — Residents and Fellows

- In 2019, the specialties with the largest numbers of first-year ACGME residents and fellows were the primary care specialties of internal medicine (10,379), family medicine/general practice (4,456), and pediatrics (2,993). (Refer to Table 2.1.)
- In 2019, 45.8% of the residents and fellows in ACGME-accredited programs were female. Percentages of females in the 47 largest specialties ranged from a high of 83.8% in obstetrics and gynecology residencies to a low of 12.9% in sports medicine (orthopedic surgery) residencies. (Refer to Table 2.2.)
- In 2019, the largest proportion of residents and fellows in ACGME-accredited programs were U.S. MDs (61.1%), while international medical graduates (IMGs) made up 23.1%, and DOs made up 15.7%. (Refer to Tables 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5.)
- Between 2014 and 2019, urology (+84.1%),² sports medicine (+29.1%), and neurology (+25.2%) saw the most growth in the numbers of first-year ACGME residents and fellows. Sports medicine (-11.8%), ophthalmology (-10.9%), and plastic surgery (-10.8%) saw the biggest decreases. (Refer to Table 2.6.)

Notes

1. In the late 1980s, pulmonology disease began to evolve into pulmonary critical care. As such, the aging physicians in the pulmonary disease specialty, and the decrease in this single specialty, is most likely due to pulmonary disease being replaced by pulmonary critical care.
2. All urology programs are now five years in length. As such, the large increase in first-year residents in urology programs may be due to the incorporation of a preliminary surgical year in urology training programs.