

Press Release

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Projected Primary Care Physician Shortfalls Will Reach 14% in Wisconsin

WCMEW Projects Primary Care Deficits, With Wide Regional Variance Across the State

Madison (July 13, 2018) – Over the last decade, new education and training programs have shown positive results in Primary Care Physician (PCP) development and retention across Wisconsin, leveraging noteworthy innovations in clinical training and in-state retention strategies. Medical College of Wisconsin expansions and state investment in residency programs are projected to produce over 450 new physicians by year 2035. However, demand for PCPs, driven by an expanding and aging population, will still outpace projected supply.

According to George Quinn, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council on Medical Education and Workforce (WCMEW), “to date, a largely uncoordinated approach to education and training has hampered a comprehensive solution to the impending problem of workforce shortages. What we need now is wide-reaching system planning to deal with current and future severe shortages – across provider types.”

Based on a new WCMEW report, *Mapping Our Way to Success: Wisconsin’s Physician Workforce*, nearly 40% of the current PCP workforce is expected to retire by 2035, a challenge that is compounded by other major demographic shifts. Provider gaps will be distributed unevenly across the state – with most regions experiencing significant deficits in future PCPs, up to 93% in the year 2035.

WCMEW’s 2018 report recommends strategies for continued emphasis on infrastructure and long-term planning, along with collecting and leveraging data for decision-making. Specific recommendations, among others, include:

- Expanding and enhancing coordination of clinical sites;
- Expanding rural and underserved programs by targeting students likely to practice in those areas;
- Building workforce into strategic planning processes;
- Developing Advanced Practice Clinician data for a more complete understanding of the workforce; and
- Identifying best practices and outcomes for team-based care.

Data from the new WCMEW report indicates that, currently, 82.5% of Wisconsin’s total physicians are located in Metropolitan areas, whereas 71% of Wisconsin’s population is located in these areas. Conversely, less than 10% of Wisconsin physicians practice in rural areas, whereas nearly one-fifth of the population is located in small towns or rural communities.

By 2035, the PCP workforce is projected to increase by approximately 4% statewide, but the projected increase from medical schools, GME programs, and turnover are largely offset by retirements of current physicians and lifestyle changes of young physicians.

While the population is expected to increase 12% statewide, demand is expected to increase by over 20%. There is wide variance among Wisconsin’s regions where demand for primary care is expected to increase up to 40%, based on total population increases and increased care for an aging population. Statewide, there is a projected shortfall of 745 PCPs, or 14% compared to overall supply. Wide variance among regions is evident, ranging up to a deficit of 93.7%. “While Wisconsin has invested significantly in necessary physician training infrastructure, regional shortage data suggests that we can’t expect to fill demand for primary care through physicians alone, and therefore we need to rethink workforce silos and collectively develop solutions – such as the strategies outlined in WCMEW’s 2018 report,” concludes Mr. Quinn. The full report can be found at www.wcmew.org.