



## OB-GYN'S ARE NOT LEAVING NEW YORK

### NEW YORK HAS A LARGE NUMBER OF OB-GYNS PER CAPITA AND THIS NUMBER IS NOT DECLINING

New York has the fourth highest number of OB-GYNs per capita in the country.<sup>1</sup> The Center for Health Workforce, part of the School of Public Health, University at Albany, State University of New York- an academic institution that monitors physician supply - found that the number of OB-GYN's in New York State has been stable for the last decade and between 2005 and 2006, the number of physicians doing obstetrics *increased* – all while birth rates are dropping in New York State. *The Center testified before the Governor's Medical Malpractice Task Force on October 15, 2007.*

#### Overall Change in OB-GYN Supply from 2005 to 2006

	Physicians	Physicians per 100K population	Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	FTEs per 100K population
Obstetrics and/or Gynecology	+310	+2	+319	+2
Obstetrics and Gynecology	+238	+1	+270	+2
Gynecology	+72	No Change	+48	No Change

Sources: Armstrong DP and Forte GJ. *Annual New York Physician Workforce Profile, 2006 and 2007 Editions*. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany.

The Center for Health Workforce Studies also found that between 2000 and 2005, the number of obstetricians in relation to the state's birthrate grew by 2.4 percent. The Center found, "demographic changes appear to be contributing to a reduction in demand for some obstetrical services in New York."<sup>2</sup>

### WHILE OB-GYN SUPPLY IS NOT DECLINING, SOME PHYSICIANS DO LEAVE; HOWEVER, THE REASONS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MALPRACTICE

The following chart from the Center for Health Workforce Studies shows that the main reasons physicians leave the state are: proximity to family; inadequate salary; and visa issues. For non-

<sup>1</sup> NYPIRG, Center for Medical Consumers and Public Citizen, *The Doctor Is In: New York's Increasing Number of Doctors*, October 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Changing Practice Patterns of Obstetricians/Gynecologists in New York, April 2006. Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany.

primary care physicians, no more than three percent leave due to the cost of malpractice insurance – practically dead last on the list of possible reasons for leaving New York State.

### **Principal Reason for Doctors Leaving New York After Completion of Residency/Fellowship**

<b>Reason for Leaving New York</b>	<b>Primary Care</b>	<b>Non Primary Care</b>	<b>Total</b>
Overall Lack of Jobs	8%	5%	6%
Lack of Jobs that Met Visa Requirements	15%	3%	7%
Lack of Jobs in Desired Locations	4%	5%	4%
Lack of Jobs in Desired Practice Settings	3%	5%	4%
Inadequate Salary Offered	19%	22%	21%
Cost of Malpractice Insurance	1%	3%	2%
Lack of Jobs for Spouse/Partner	1%	2%	1%
Proximity to Family	20%	29%	26%
Climate	4%	4%	4%
Never Intended to Practice in New York	15%	11%	12%
Other	12%	11%	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Resident Exit Survey Summary Brief: *Why Do New Physicians Leave New York and How Do They Find Their Jobs?* David P. Armstrong, Gaetano J. Forte, and Jean Moore, Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health University at Albany, State University of New York, December 2007.

### **LIFESTYLE CHOICES – NOT MALPRACTICE ISSUES - DOMINATE DOCTOR DECISION-MAKING ON WHERE AND IN WHAT SPECIALTY TO PRACTICE.**

It is well-documented that lifestyle considerations are the most important factor for determining not only a doctor’s choice of location, but also his or her choice of specialty - far more important than income and expenses. The *New York Times* reported, “Today’s medical residents, half of them women, are choosing specialties with what experts call a ‘controllable lifestyle.’” That means avoiding specialties, like surgery or obstetrics, that require doctors be on call 24 hours a day.<sup>3</sup>

Physician shortages that exist in New York’s rural areas are longstanding and correlate to stagnating local economies and decreasing populations in those regions, not to lawsuits or insurance rates. For example, in the late 1990s, Oswego County reported great difficulty attracting physicians because of the “weather factor” and other lifestyles issues, including “boredom.” Another problem was the lack of professional jobs in the area for spouses. Officials also noted, “because the large hospitals offer the latest in technology and research, physicians are often lured to the major cities.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2008, the Governor proposed a program called “Doctors Across New York.” The plan would provide incentives for an employment commitment in these areas, with a significant medical school loan forgiveness program and increased Medicaid reimbursement rates to doctors and clinics in underserved areas. This is the proper solution to this longstanding problem.

<sup>3</sup> Matt Richtel, “Young Doctors and Wish Lists: No Weekend Calls, No Beepers,” *New York Times*, January 7, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Carol Thompson, “Recruiting and Retaining Physicians Not an Easy Task,” *Oswego County Business*, April/May 1998.