



## DOCTORS ARE *NOT* LEAVING NEW YORK

### NEW YORK HAS A LARGE NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS PER CAPITA AND THIS NUMBER IS *NOT* DECLINING

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 – called New York “*the most richly supplied state in the nation in terms of the number of physicians in practice relative to the state population.*” They say that the opportunities for physicians entering practice in most specialties have improved over the period the Center has been conducting this survey.”<sup>1</sup> *The Center testified before the Governor’s Medical Malpractice Task Force on October 15, 2007.*

#### Overall Change in Physician Supply from 2005 to 2006

	Physicians	Physicians per 100K population	Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	FTEs per 100K population
2005	61,931	321	55,390	287
2006	62,770	325	56,811	295
Net Gain/Loss	+839	+4	+1,421	+8

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.

### WHILE PHYSICIAN 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-primary care physicians, no more than three percent leave due to the cost of malpractice insurance. For primary care physicians, it is even less, only one percent, and dead last on the list of possible reasons for leaving New York State.

<sup>1</sup> *Physician Supply and Demand Indicators in New York, 2000-2005: A Summary of Trends for 35 Medical Specialties.* Rensselaer, NY: Center for Health Workforce Studies, School of Public Health, SUNY Albany.

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

Reason for Leaving New York	Primary Care	Non Primary Care	Total
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%
Total	100%	100%	100%

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>2</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>3</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>2</sup> Matt Richtel, “Young Doctors and Wish Lists: No Weekend Calls, No Beepers, *New York Times*, January 7, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Carol Thompson, “Recruiting and Retaining Physicians Not an Easy Task,” *Oswego County Business*, April/May 1998.