



The Doctor Is(n't) In

Overview

Arizona has a good news/bad news situation when it comes to the supply of medical doctors (MDs) and doctors of osteopathy (DOs) in our state. Good news: the number of physicians practicing in Arizona increased from 2004 to 2005. Bad news: although the number of physicians in Arizona is increasing, our supply of doctors is not keeping

pace with the state's rapid population growth. According to Part II of the *Arizona Physician Workforce Study*, the number of practicing physicians MDs and DOs in Arizona increased from 12,024 in 2004 to 13,215 in 2005.¹

But while the number of practicing physi-

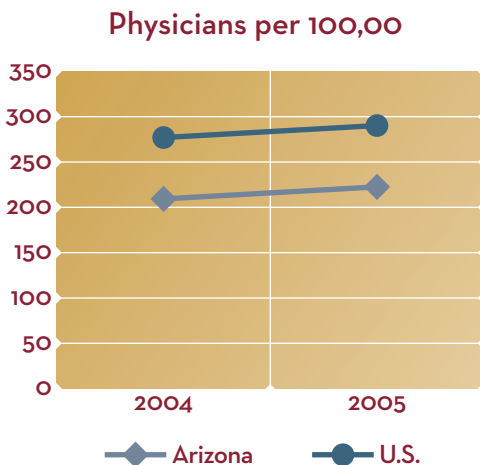
cians in Arizona increased 10 percent from 2004 to 2005, the physicians per 100,000 population ratio increased by only 6 percent—from 207 in 2004 to 219 in 2005—and remains well below the national average of 293/100,000.

Also, the physician population is aging more rapidly than the general population, especially in Arizona. Nationwide, 18 percent of physicians were older than age 65 compared to 12.6 percent of the population. In Arizona, more than 20 percent of physicians were older than age 65, according to the U.S. Health Workforce Profile.²

Not Enough Med Schools

New York has 12. California has eight. Even tiny Puerto Rico has three. But despite Arizona's booming population, our state only has one allopathic medical school (which trains traditional medical doctors, or MDs). Although the state also has an osteopathic medical school (which trains doctors of osteopathy, or DOs), Arizona's two medical schools combined graduate approximately 240 physicians each year. Because of the small number of graduates from Arizona medical schools and our rapidly growing population, Arizona cannot rely solely upon its own medical schools as a source of future physicians. Consider the following statistics:

- The majority (89 percent) of today's Arizona physicians graduated from medical schools located outside of Arizona.
- Approximately 83 percent of Arizona MDs completed their residency training in a program located outside of Arizona.³



Lots of People, Few Med Schools⁷

STATE	MED SCHOOLS	POP. RANK
Arizona	1	16
Tennessee	4	17
Missouri	4	18
Maryland	3	19
Wisconsin	2	20
Minnesota	2	21
Colorado	1	22
Alabama	2	23
Louisiana	3	24



A Question of Training

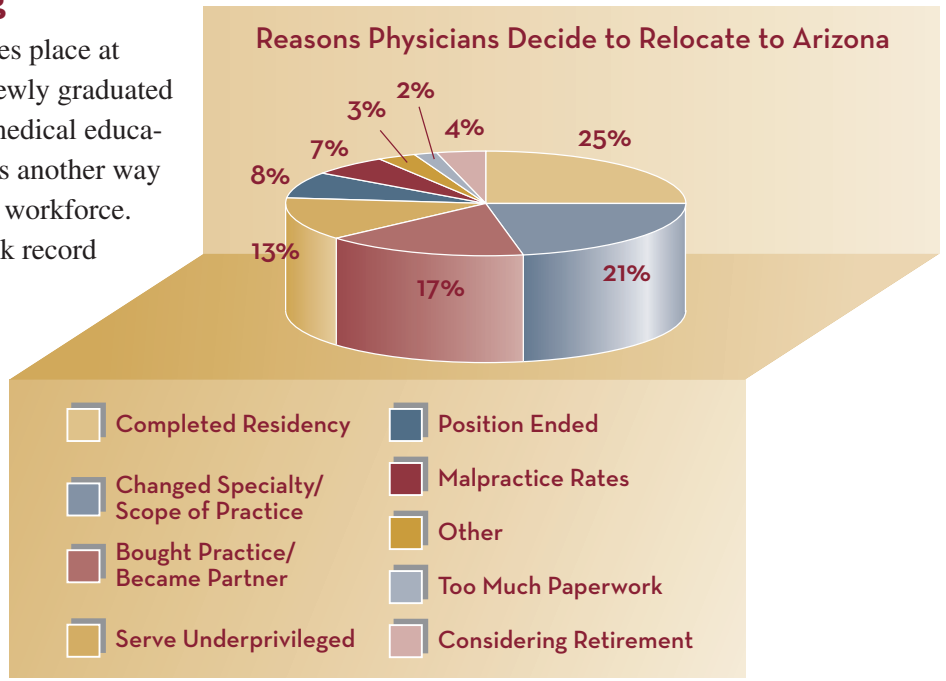
Residency training, which takes place at teaching hospitals, is where newly graduated doctors go to complete their medical education. Residency training also is another way to bolster Arizona's physician workforce. Our state has an excellent track record of retaining the doctors who complete their residency training in Arizona teaching hospitals.

Nearly one-fifth (17 percent) of practicing Arizona physicians completed a residency training program here, compared to just 11 percent who graduated from an Arizona medical school.

In 2006, the Arizona Legislature appropriated \$13 million in additional state and federal funds to support and expand physician residency programs at Arizona's teaching hospitals.

Lawmakers may appropriate additional funds for graduate medical education in FY 2008 in order to increase our supply of physicians. However, even if the number of physicians coming out of Arizona's residency programs were to dramatically increase, Arizona will continue to rely upon residency training programs outside of Arizona as its major source for new physicians.

Reasons Physicians Decide to Relocate to Arizona



Shortage Helps Cause, Exacerbate Emergency Care

The critical shortage of physicians of all types in Arizona is only compounding the overcrowding in hospital emergency departments (EDs).

More than half of the state's EDs report that they need on-call specialists, including neurosurgeons, hand surgeons, vascular surgeons, plastic surgeons, ENT specialists and gastroenterologists.⁴

The specialists needed to care for serious injuries and life threatening emergency medical conditions are often not available at some hospitals.

Why are so many physicians today choosing not to practice in an ED setting? When surveyed on this question, physicians most often cited liability concerns.⁵ Physicians are wary about practicing in EDs because:

- it can be far more challenging to treat a patient in an emergency setting where there is no comprehensive knowledge of the patient's history and no immediate access to their medical records;
- a significant number of surgeons have been sued by patients first seen in the ED; and
- some physicians are even offered discounts on their liability coverage if they limit or eliminate their ED on-call availability.⁵

Medical liability has become such an over-arching concern that many physicians simply choose not to practice in certain states due to the changing (and increasingly hostile) legal environment. States with caps on medical liability awards are keeping their physicians, as well as attracting new doctors. Yet fewer than one in ten physicians new to Arizona cited favorable medical liability rates as a reason for moving to our state.⁶

Because the health of Arizona's citizens depends on an adequate supply of physician services, the state must ensure both an adequate number of practicing physicians and an appropriate mix of physician specialties. Hospitals and health systems are taking several steps to achieve this vision:

- Arizona's healthcare community overwhelmingly supports federal caps on non-economic damage awards in medical liability cases. Predictable medical liability premiums would make Arizona a more stable climate in which doctors can do business;
- hospitals support increased funding for graduate medical education because physicians who complete their residency training in Arizona are more likely to settle here to practice;
- hospital-based medical residency programs in Arizona are poised to support the expansion of the University of Arizona College of Medicine into downtown Phoenix; and
- hospitals support legislation to establish funding for a state-operated physician recruitment office to assist physicians who wish to relocate to Arizona.

Contact:

Bridget O'Gara
Vice President of Communications
602-445-4300, ext. 4318
bogara@azhha.org

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- 1 The Arizona Physician Workforce Study, Part II, Arizona State University Center for Health Information & Research, 2006
 - 2 U.S. Health Workforce Profile, Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration, 2006
 - 3 *The Arizona Physician Workforce Study, Part II*
 - 4 Responding to Arizona's Emergency Care Crisis: SB 1351 – Burden of Proof; Emergency Treatment, report sponsored by Arizona College of Emergency Physicians, Arizona Emergency Nurses Association, Arizona Medical Association, Arizona Nurses Association and Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association.
 - 5 *A Growing Crisis in Patient Access to Emergency Surgical Care*, American College of Surgeons, Division of Advocacy and Health Policy, 2006.
 - 6 *The Arizona Physician Workforce Study, Part II*
 - 7 Association of American Medical Colleges (state population rankings, U.S. Census Bureau, 2006)