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The Growing Demand for Hospice and Palliative Medicine Physicians: Will the Supply Keep Up?

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Future HPM Physician Workforce Supply and Need

Title: The Growing Demand for Hospice and Palliative Medicine Physicians: Will the Supply Keep Up?

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Abstract:

Context: The need for hospice and palliative care is growing rapidly as the population increases and ages and as both hospice and palliative care become more accepted. Hospice and palliative medicine (HPM) is a relatively new physician specialty, currently training 325 new fellows annually. Given the time needed to increase the supply of specialty trained physicians, it is important to assess future needs to guide planning for future training capacity.

Objectives: We modeled the need for and supply of specialist HPM physicians through the year 2040 to determine whether training capacity should continue growing.

Methods: To create a benchmark for need we used a population based approach to look at the current geographic distribution of the HPM physician supply. To model future supply, we calculated the annual change in current supply by adding newly trained physicians and subtracting physicians leaving the labor force.

Results: The current U.S. supply of HPM specialists is 13.35 per 100,000 adults 65 and over. This ratio varies greatly across the country. Using alternate assumptions for future supply and demand, we project need in 2040 will range from 10,640 to almost 24,000 HPM specialist physicians. Supply will range from 8,100 to 19,000.

Conclusion: Current training capacity is insufficient to keep up with population growth and demand for services. HPM fellowships would need to grow from the current 325 graduates annually to between 500 to 600 per year by 2030 to assure sufficient physician workforce for hospice and palliative care services given current service provision patterns.

Key words

physician workforce, physician supply, hospice and palliative medicine physician workforce, fellowship

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