

AAFP News: AFP Edition

Policy and Health Issues in the News

Studies: Medical Education System Not Meeting Physician Workforce Needs

Two recently published articles conclude that the current medical school system is failing to produce the workforce that the nation needs if it is to achieve optimal health outcomes. The articles in the October 2017 issue of *Family Medicine* look at the entry of medical school graduates into family medicine residency programs in 2016-2017 and the growth of the U.S. primary care workforce. The authors note that despite the growth of family medicine and primary care in the past several years, the gap between the growth of subspecialties is widening. During the past 32 years, the number of nonprimary care postgraduate year 1 positions grew at an annual rate of 225 per year; by comparison, primary care positions added just 21 positions per year. The authors note the uneven growth in the number of new primary care positions by specialty since 2009: family medicine (823), medicine-pediatrics (27), medicine-primary (94), and pediatrics-primary (4). However, more graduates of primary care internal medicine residency programs are becoming hospitalists, from 28.3% in 2012 to 32.9% in 2015. By comparison, the rate of family medicine graduates turning to hospitalist positions increased from 6.5% to 7.4% during that same period. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/education-professional-development/20171004matchanalysis.html>.

Residents Who Train in THCs More Likely to Practice in Underserved Areas

A high percentage of residents who train in community-based settings, especially those in family medicine, aim to continue practicing in underserved areas, according to a recent study. The study validates one of the main reasons that teaching health centers (THCs) receive federal funding as policymakers seek to expand access to care and encourage medical residents to work in areas of greatest need. Data were drawn from surveys of THC residents training in academic years 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 as part of a five-year evaluation of the THC Graduate Medical Education program. Only 24% of all residency graduates from 2006-2015 went on to practice in underserved settings, but 55% of the THC residents surveyed said they planned to do so. Of those in family medicine THC residency programs, 66% said they intend to practice in an underserved area. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/education-professional-development/20170925thcunderserved.html>.

CDC Launches Rx Awareness Campaign to Educate Patients About Opioid Epidemic

Between 1999 and 2015, more than 183,000 Americans died from overdoses related to prescription opioids, and the battle to overcome this public health crisis continues. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently launched the Rx Awareness campaign, which features real-life testimonials of persons affected by the opioid epidemic and communication tools family physicians can use to educate patients on this issue. The campaign will offer resources such as videos, radio spots and transcripts, and social media images highlighting the importance of knowing the risks associated with prescription opioids. Rx Awareness is part of a five-point strategy to fight the opioid epidemic by improving access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services, including medication-assisted treatments; targeting availability and distribution of overdose-reversing drugs; strengthening our understanding of the crisis through better public health data and reporting; providing support for research on pain and addiction; and advancing better practices for pain management. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20171006rxaware.html>.

CDC Report: Sexually Transmitted Infections Hit All-time High in 2016

More than 2 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were reported in the United States in 2016—the highest number ever, according to the CDC's annual Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance Report. *Chlamydia trachomatis* infections were the biggest offender, with about 1.6 million cases diagnosed. Nearly 470,000 cases of gonorrhea and 28,000 cases of primary and secondary syphilis were also reported. Chlamydial infection rates were highest among adolescent and young adult females, populations traditionally targeted for routine chlamydia screening. However, spikes in syphilis and gonorrhea cases that occurred in certain patient populations in 2016 were not anticipated. Although the number of newly diagnosed cases of gonorrhea rose in men and women last year, men saw the steepest increase, at 22.2%. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20171003cdctrdrpt.html>.

— AFP AND AAFP NEWS STAFF

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