

Background

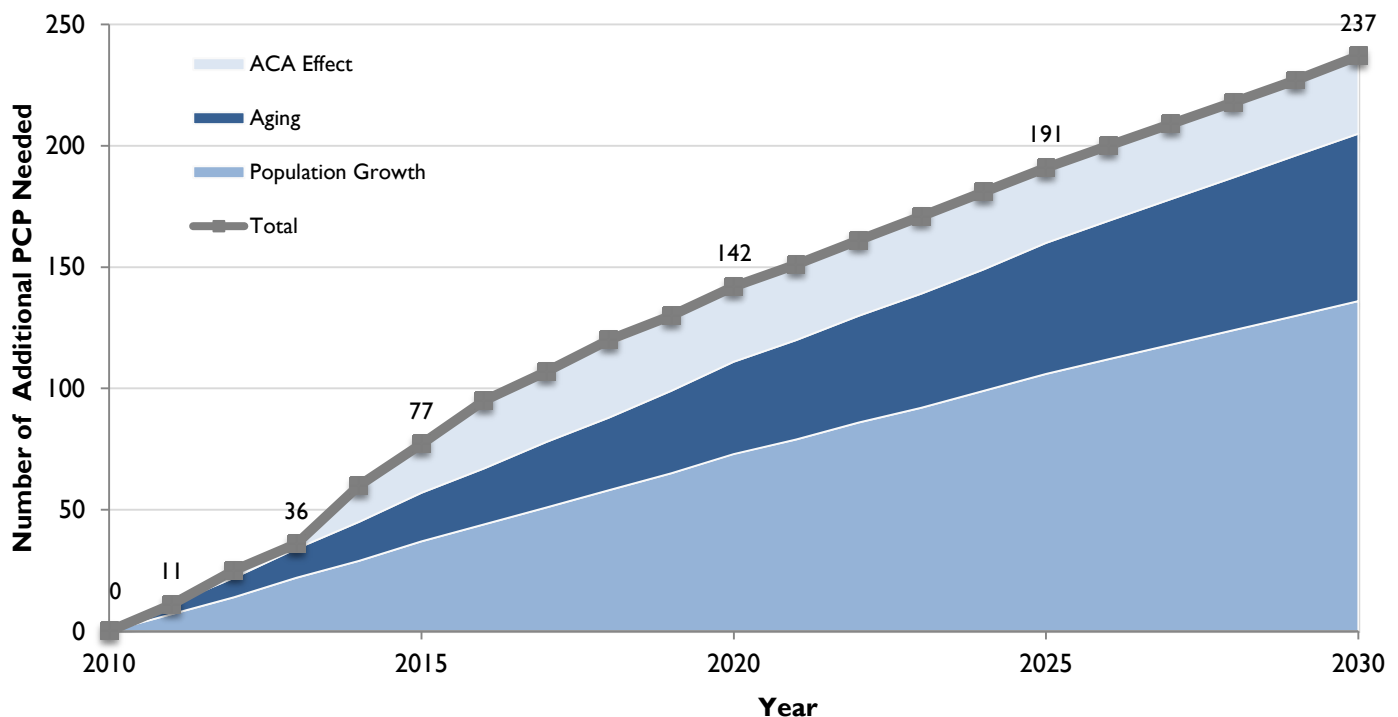
Primary care physicians (PCP) workforce shortages challenge the long term viability of U.S. primary care, a foundation of the Triple Aim for U.S. health care. The Triple Aim envisions primary care as an integrating component working across its three goals of improving the quality of care, improving health of populations, and reducing per capita health care costs.¹ Studies of the future need for primary care providers indicate that demographic and policy trends will only strain a workforce already struggling to meet national needs.² Other analyses document geographic maldistribution of PCPs, within states as well as across states.³ Addressing both physician shortages and maldistribution requires analysis and action on the state level.

Methods. The Robert Graham Center projected the Alaska PCP workforce necessary to maintain current primary care utilization rates, accounting for increased demand due to aging, population growth, and an increasingly insured population due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Primary care use was estimated with 2010 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) data. Current active PCPs within Alaska were identified using the 2010 American Medical Association (AMA) Masterfile, adjusting for retirees and physicians with a primary care specialty but not practicing in primary care settings. Alaska population projections are from those produced by the state based on the 2010 Census.⁴

Workforce Projections 2010-2030

To maintain current rates of utilization, Alaska will need an additional 237 primary care physicians by 2030, a 40% increase compared to the state's current (as of 2010) 588 PCP workforce.

Alaska Projected Primary Care Physicians Need



Suggested citation: Petterson, Stephen M; Cai, Angela; Moore, Miranda; Bazemore, Andrew. State-level projections of primary care workforce, 2010-2030. September 2013, Robert Graham Center, Washington, D.C.

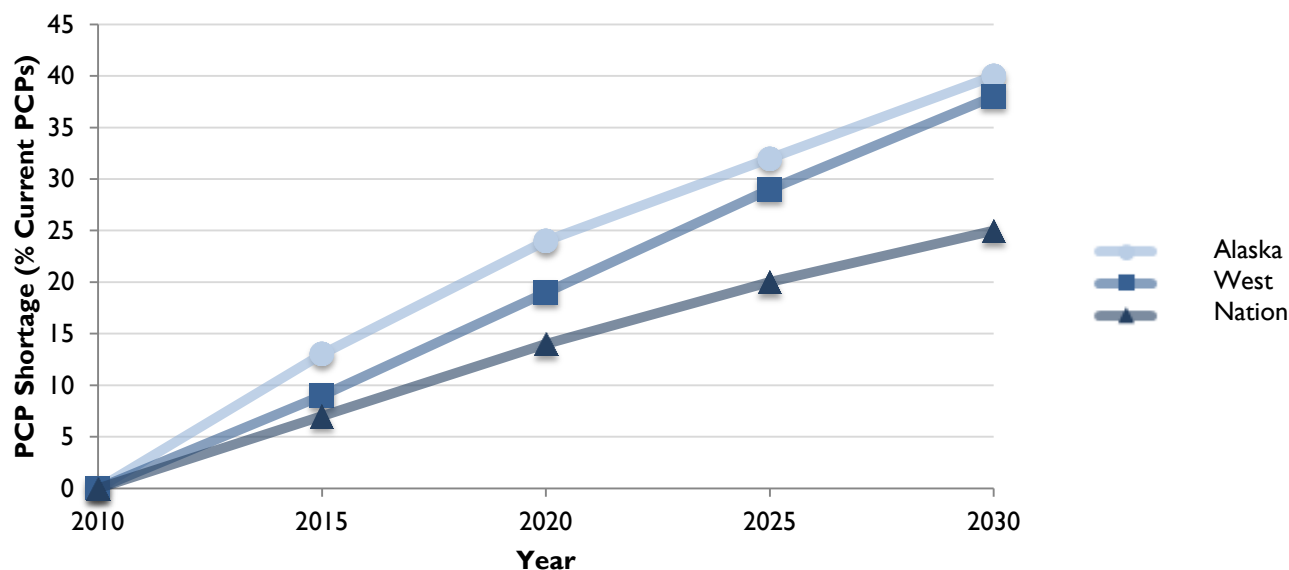
¹ Berwick, D. M., Nolan, T. W., & Whittington, J. (2008). The triple aim: care, health, and cost. *Health Affairs*, 27(3), 759–69. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.27.3.759

² Petterson, S. M., Liaw, W. R., Phillips, R. L., Rabin, D. L., Meyers, D. S., & Bazemore, A. W. (2012). Projecting US Primary Care Physician Workforce Needs : physician supply meet demands of an increasing and aging population? *Health Affairs*, 27(3), w232–w241. Also see Colwill, J., Cultice, J., & Kruse, R. (2008). Will generalist physician supply meet demands of an increasing and aging population? *Health Affairs*, 27(3), w232–w241.

³ Council on Graduate Medical Education Tenth Report: *Physician Distribution and Health Care Challenges in Rural and Inner-city Areas*. (1998). Washington, D.C.

⁴ <http://labor.alaska.gov/research/pop/popproj.htm>. For full description of the methodology, see <http://www.graham-center.org/tools-resources/state-projections.htm>.

Physician Demand Comparison – State, Region, Nation



Implications for Alaska

To maintain the status quo, Alaska will require an additional 237 primary care physicians by 2030, a 40% increase of the state's current (as of 2010) 588 practicing PCPs. The current population to PCP ratio of 1214:1 is lower than the national average of 1463:1. The 2030 projection stands above the West overall and above the nation overall. Components of Alaska's increased need for PCPs include 29% (69 PCPs) from increased utilization due to aging, 57% (136 PCPs) due to population growth, and 13% (32 PCPs) due to a greater insured population following the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Pressures from a growing, aging, increasingly insured population call on Alaska to address current and growing demand for PCPs to adequately meet health care needs. Policymakers in Alaska should consider strategies to bolster the primary care pipeline including reimbursement reform, dedicated funding for primary care Graduate Medical Education (GME), increased funding for primary care training and medical school debt relief.

Highlights: Alaska's Projected Primary Care Physician Demand

Additional PCPs Required by 2030

237

Or, **40%** of current workforce, due to an aging, growing and increasingly insured population.

Current Primary Care Physician Workforce
588

The state's PCP ratio of 1214:1 is lower than the national average of 1463:1.

Potential Solutions –

Bolster the Primary Care Pipeline

- ❖ Physician reimbursement reform
- ❖ Dedicated funding for primary care Graduate Medical Education (GME)
- ❖ Increased funding for primary care training (Title VII, Section 747)
- ❖ Medical school student debt relief