

Poll Finds New York State Physicians Frustrated by Liability Costs and Mandates
Press Release
By The Medical Society of the State of New York
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Only 35% of physicians would recommend to their children or other family members that they become physicians and only 22% of physicians would recommend to medical students that they practice in New York State, according to a survey conducted by the Medical Society of the State of New York. The survey of over 800 physician respondents sought to gauge physician perspective of a variety of issues relating to the state of New York's health care delivery system.

"The findings provide additional statistical proof of the frustrations physicians often express that New York State is a very difficult state in which to deliver health care" stated Dr. Sam Unterricht, a Brooklyn ophthalmologist and President of the Medical Society of the State of New York. "This is due to a confluence of a number of factors, including its extraordinarily high liability insurance costs and the large number of practice mandates. At the same time insurers continue to impose additional roadblocks to delivering patient care and continue to reduce, deny and delay payment for necessary care delivered. These problems must be considered and addressed as policymakers hope to assure an adequate health care safety net for the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who will be obtaining health insurance coverage for the first time through the State's Health Insurance Exchange."

Notably, the survey highlighted the increasing "hassle factor" physicians experience in attempting to assure their patients can obtain the care they need. Nearly 83% of responding physicians indicated that the time they spend obtaining authorizations from health insurers for patient care has increased in the last three years, with nearly 60% indicating that it had "increased significantly." Moreover, nearly 25% of respondents highlighted administrative hassles as the biggest impediment to delivering care to their patients, while an additional 31% indicated that it was the second biggest impediment.

Nearly 65% of physicians indicated that their compensation had decreased in the last 5 years. 32% indicated that it had "decreased significantly." Not surprisingly, the biggest problem identified by physicians (41%) in delivering care to their patients was insufficient payment by insurers and government payors. Nearly 25% indicated that it was the second biggest problem.

With regard to liability costs, nearly 40% of the respondents indicated that medical liability insurance costs consumed at least 10% of their practice revenue, and nearly 16% indicated that it consumed at least 20% of their practice revenue. Over 17% of physicians named high liability costs as the biggest impediment to delivering care in New York, while over 22% noted it as the second biggest impediment.

As a result of all these hassles, over one-third (34%) of the respondents indicated that they were "seriously considering" retiring from practice in the next two years, and over 37% indicated that they plan to reduce the services they deliver over the next two years.

Other notable results were that nearly 65% of respondents currently use an electronic prescribing system, and over 62% have implemented an electronic medical record system in their practice. Over 83% of the respondents participate in Medicare and over two thirds (67.6%) participate in Medicaid or with a Medicaid managed care plan.

"We urge the Legislature and the Governor to carefully consider the findings of this study," stated Dr. Unterricht. "You cannot have a functioning healthcare system without assuring an adequate supply of physicians to deliver the care patients expect. Legislation must be enacted and regulatory steps must be taken to assure that New York will once again be an attractive place to start and maintain a medical practice. Equally important, legislation that may further drive physicians from remaining to practice in New York must be rejected".

Founded in 1807, the Medical Society of the State of New York is the state's principal non-profit professional organization for physicians, residents and medical students of all specialties. Its mission is to represent the interests of patients and physicians to assure quality healthcare services for all.

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