Survey Paints Stormy Picture Of Medical Profession

A recently released survey conducted by The Physicians Foundation shows that physicians in the U.S. have a very gloomy outlook for the future of healthcare as a career. The survey is one of the largest of its kind ever undertaken in the U.S., and is comprised of responses from 13,575 U.S. physicians. It was conducted throughout the first six months of 2012 and data was released in September 2012.

The Physicians Foundation is a nonprofit that works in the support of physicians. The organization completed the survey with the help of Merritt Hawkins, a physician search firm. Questions on the survey ranged from career satisfaction, thoughts on healthcare reform, the state of the medical profession, and what physicians foresee for the future of medicine and medical practice.Some of the findings include:

- 84 percent of respondents believe that the medical profession is declining and 77.4 percent are pessimistic about the future of the medical profession.
- Older physicians, male physicians, practice owners, and specialists were the most pessimistic groups, with younger doctors, female doctors, primary care physicians and employed physicians feeling more optimistic about the medical profession.
- Over 82 percent of the responding physicians are unsure about the future of the healthcare system and their role in it over the next 3-5 years.
- Doctors are working fewer hours already compared with four years ago, and over 50 percent of the physicians surveyed plan on cutting back on their hours in the next three years through a combination of retirement, cutting back on patient numbers, switching to concierge service, or going to a part-time schedule.

The survey findings affirm what many healthcare professionals and advocates have seen occurring in the medical profession over the past 5-10 years. Physician shortages, less access to healthcare, and a reduction in the quality of care are all significant concerns for the future of medicine in the U.S. “Uncertainty is the biggest driver of physician pessimism and right now it’s at an all-time high,” said Lou Goodman, PhD, president of the Physicians Foundation. “The uncertainty of the economy as a whole, the looming Medicare cut to physician pay and the changes brought by the Affordable Care Act are just a few of the factors unnerving doctors,” he said.

One thing that is certain: the growing number of physicians who are silently leaving the ranks of medical practice. The full report can be found here [1].

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