



The Maryland State Medical Society

News: For Immediate Release

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SURVEY: 16,000 PHYSICIAN PRACTICES HAVE CLOSED DUE TO THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19

BALTIMORE, August 26, 2020 — Eight percent of physicians, or approximately 16,000 practices, have closed their practices as a result of COVID-19 according to a new survey. Of these, the majority (76%) are independent private practices.

The national *Survey of America's Physicians* is conducted by Merritt Hawkins, a collaborator of MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, on behalf of The Physicians Foundation, a nonprofit seeking to advance the work of practicing physicians and help them facilitate the delivery of high-quality health care to patients. Started in 2008, the survey is now conducted on a biennial basis and is sent to hundreds of thousands of physicians nationwide.

The 2020 edition of the survey focuses on how physicians and their patients are being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the 8% of physicians who have closed their practices in the last four months as a result of the virus, 4% plan to close in the next 12 months. Of those who have closed, the majority (72%) are private practice owners or partners.

“The pandemic has had a devastating effect on many small businesses, including private physician practices,” said Kurt Mosley, Vice President of Strategic Alliances for Merritt Hawkins. “Many physicians have been compelled to give up private practice in recent years due to rising costs, regulations and other challenges. The pandemic has simply been a bridge too far for some physicians.”

The majority of physicians (78%) indicated they had experienced a reduction in patient or RVU volumes in the last four months. Of these, 41% said they saw volume decreases of 26% or more. Decreases in practice volume can have a ripple effect that extends to hospitals, according to Mosley, who points to the fact that physicians, on average, generate \$2.4 million in net revenue for their affiliated hospitals, as tracked by Merritt Hawkins.

“Physicians are the economic engines of healthcare,” Mosley said. “When they slow down, the whole healthcare system slows down.”

Other findings of the survey include:

- 43% of physicians have reduced their staffs as a result of COVID-19
- 12%, approximately 100,000 physicians, have switched to a primarily telemedicine practice
- 9% said the pandemic will result in fewer independent physician practices
- 50% said hospitals will exert more control over the organization and delivery of healthcare as a result of the pandemic
- 59% said opening public places presents a greater risk to patients than prolonging social distancing.

MedChi President, Dr. Michele Manahan states, “this survey provides extremely important information. Ten percent of the nationwide pool of respondents were physicians from Maryland, giving our state the plurality of respondent data. It really behooves us to think and act on this.”

The survey includes a number of additional data points as well as an analysis that explores the implications of the data for physicians, patients, hospitals and other stakeholders. MedChi Members can obtain a copy of the survey report by contacting Merritt Hawkins Regional Vice President Jeremy Robinson at jeremy.robinson@merritthawkins

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.