

- Strategic Planning
- Leadership Advisory Services
- Business & Financial Planning
- Clinical Program Planning
- Physician Strategies
- Medical Staff Development
- Ambulatory Care Planning
- Facility Planning & Space Programming
- Demand Forecasting & Resource Development

Click here to visit the [Massachusetts Medical Society website](#)

Click here to view the [Massachusetts Medical Society report on the state's physician workforce](#)

Click here to view the [report, Access Denied: A Look at America's Medically Disenfranchised](#)

Strategies & Solutions is the monthly electronic newsletter published by [Health Strategies & Solutions, Inc.](#), which provides cutting-edge strategies, innovative solutions, and practical ideas for health care professionals. We welcome your [comments and feedback](#). To subscribe or unsubscribe to this publication, click on the links at the bottom of this page.

Primary Care Physician Shortage: Reality or Hype?

In June 2006, the [Massachusetts Medical Society](#) issued a [comprehensive report](#) on the state's physician workforce that included an "alarming" new finding: a shortage of physicians in internal medicine and family practice. That marked the first time that shortages in primary care were recorded in Massachusetts, one of the most physician-rich states in the country. According to the report, the percentage of people waiting more than two months to see a primary care physician jumped from 10 percent in 2005 to 16 percent in 2006.



In March 2007, a [study](#) co-sponsored by the [National Association of Community Health Centers](#) and the [American Academy of Family Physicians](#) categorized nearly one in five Americans as medically disenfranchised, because they had inadequate access or no access to primary care physicians.

Many supply-side factors are believed to contribute to the apparent shortage of primary care physicians: fewer physicians choosing to enter primary care specialties because of high case loads, stressful working

Click here to visit the National Association of Community Health Centers website

conditions, salaries well below the norm for procedure-oriented specialties, lifestyle choices made by many younger and women physicians who desire to work fewer hours per week, and the increasing tendency of older physicians to retire early or switch careers.

Click here to visit the American Academy of Family Physicians website

Looking ahead, the aging of the population will cause the demand for primary care physicians to grow steadily over the next 15 to 20 years, while universal health insurance, if legislated after the presidential election, could significantly increase demand for primary care within younger age groups, as it apparently has in Massachusetts.

Click here to view the University of Missouri study predicting the U.S. physician shortage

Taking all this into account, it is not surprising that many prominent health care researchers have concluded that the primary care physician shortage is a reality in 2008, and will become a more serious problem in the decade ahead. A [study](#) released by the University of Missouri in June predicts that the United States could face a shortage of up to 44,000 family physicians and general internists by 2025.

Click here to visit the Council on Graduate Medical Education website

Policy makers have responded by recommending that we produce more doctors - in primary care and in other specialties. The [Council on Graduate Medical Education](#) recommended that total enrollment in U.S. medical schools increase by 15 percent over the next 10 years. The [Association of American Medical Colleges](#) is requesting medical schools to increase enrollments by 30 percent over the next seven to 15 years.

Click here visit the Association of American Medical Colleges website

Case closed? No way. Many other prominent researchers say the United States is not facing a physician shortage, and that adding more physicians is not a sound strategy. Their arguments are as follows:

- New physicians will not choose to practice in rural areas or other physician shortage areas, so the long-standing problem of geographic maldistribution will not be solved.
- More physicians will add to health care costs, but will not result in better health outcomes.
- Increasing the supply of physicians will perpetuate existing inefficient models of care delivery.
- A better strategy would be to find ways to deliver care in a more cost-effective manner such as using teams that rely more heavily on physician assistants and nurse practitioners, allowing primary care physicians to treat larger patient panels.



The bottom line is that a primary care physician shortage is a reality reflected in the inappropriate use of hospital emergency rooms and the difficulty many health systems face attracting primary care physicians to practice in small communities or rural areas. Creative recruitment and retention strategies that strike the right balance among compensation, practice environment, and lifestyle issues will differentiate winners from losers in the search for primary care physicians, at least until broader, national solutions are found.

For more information on primary care physician supply issues, contact Hugo Finarelli at 215-399-1855 or hfinarelli@hss-inc.com.




Hugo Finarelli

Join Craig Holm and Lou Glaser for their presentation on
"Establishing a Systematic Process to Evaluate and Develop Joint Ventures and Alternatives"
September 18 in San Francisco



[Click here for more info](#)

Craig Holm Lou Glaser

 SHSMD 2008 Annual Educational Conference

Health Strategies & Solutions is looking for two talented and highly motivated consultants to help serve our growing client base

[Click here for info on our early career consultant position](#)

[Click here for info on our senior consultant position](#)

If you would like a free subscription to Strategies & Solutions, please [click here](#).

Copyright 2008 by [Health Strategies & Solutions, Inc.](#)

8 Penn Center

1628 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, Suite 200

Philadelphia, PA 19103

(215) 636-3500

www.hss-inc.com

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.



This email was sent to: ssewart@hss-inc.com

Go [here](#) to leave this mailing list or [modify](#) your email profile.

We respect your right to privacy. [View](#) our policy.



This email was sent by: **Health Strategies and Solutions, Inc.**
8 Penn Center 1628 John F. Kennedy Boulevard , Philadelphia , PA, 19103 , USA