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PRACTICING MEDICINE IN NEW JERSEY

Poll of state's doctors finds most spending less time with patients

Practicing medicine in New Jersey is a mixed bag, according to the nearly 2,100 doctors who took part in the *Monmouth University/New Jersey Monthly Poll's* Physicians Survey.

Most doctors say that New Jersey is no worse a place to practice medicine than other states. This includes 39% who say it's about the same and 21% who feel New Jersey is better than other states. In contrast, 40% of the doctors surveyed feel that New Jersey compares negatively to other states when it comes to operating a medical practice.

These doctors are split on whether they would recommend New Jersey as a place to start a new medical practice. About half say they would definitely (14%) or probably (35%) recommend the state to other docs just starting out, while the other half would definitely (15%) or probably (36%) not recommend the state as a place to set up a new medical practice.

One key issue in the negative feelings about the state of practicing medicine is that doctors feel more rushed than ever. Well over half (59%) say they have less time to spend with each of their patients than they did five years ago. Another 36% say that they spend about the same time and only 5% are now able to spend more time with each patient they see. Among those doctors who feel practicing medicine in New Jersey is worse than in other states, 3-in-4 (74%) say they have less time to spend with their patients compared to five years ago.

One insurance-related issue appears to be having an acute impact on the state's health care practitioners. Three-in-ten doctors surveyed (30%) report that the high cost of malpractice premiums have caused them to stop performing a specialty or procedure.

Furthermore, a similar number (32%) have seriously considered relocating their practice to another state. This includes 42% of doctors who have been practicing in the state for 10 years or less. Among those who have had to eliminate a procedure due to rising malpractice insurance, the percentage considering relocation is even higher at 51%.

Finally, half of New Jersey doctors in the poll (50%) have seriously considered retiring early because of issues with administering a medical practice today.

“In a departure from our typical statewide surveys, the Monmouth University poll wanted to find out what issues affect an important segment of our population,” remarked Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “The poll found that New Jersey doctors are being hit by some of the same issues affecting physicians throughout the country, but a sizable number in certain specialties feel that practicing medicine is even more difficult in the Garden State.”

Among the different types of doctors surveyed, those most likely to see New Jersey as worse than other states for practicing medicine include physicians specializing in obstetrics and gynecology (65%), radiology (56%), and general surgery (54%). At the other end of the spectrum, psychiatrists (13%) and podiatrists (21%) are least likely to feel this way.

Similarly, New Jersey psychiatrists (77%) are among those most likely to recommend the state to a colleague who is looking to set up a new practice. But OB/GYNs (29%), radiologists (30%), and surgeons (30%) are among those least likely to encourage a new colleague to set up shop in the Garden State.

Nearly 2-in-3 radiologists (63%) and half of gynecologists surveyed (49%) report that rising malpractice insurance premiums have caused them to eliminate a specialty or procedure from their practice. Those specializing in pediatrics (18%) or psychiatry (11%) are among those least likely to have faced this issue.

This poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute by mail in April 2007 with 2,085 physicians licensed to practice medicine in New Jersey for at least five years. These poll results are featured in the November 2007 issue of *New Jersey Monthly* magazine.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. How would you rate New Jersey as a place to practice medicine compared to other states?

	Total	Years in practice			Selected Fields of Medicine									
		5 to 10	11 to 20	Over 20	Anesthesiology	Family Practice	Internal Medicine	OB/GYN	Orthopedic Surgery	Pediatrics	Podiatry	Psychiatry	Radiology	General Surgery
Better	21%	19	21	22	14	17	24	4	22	28	39	33	10	17
About the same	39%	43	36	39	50	44	38	31	38	44	40	54	34	29
Worse	40%	38	44	39	36	39	38	65	41	28	21	13	56	54
Unweighted n	(2085)	(506)	(785)	(615)	(65)	(118)	(491)	(127)	(72)	(197)	(73)	(63)	(110)	(140)

2. Taking everything into account, would you recommend that a new physician start a practice in New Jersey?

	Total	Years in practice			Selected Fields of Medicine									
		5 to 10	11 to 20	Over 20	Anesthesiology	Family Practice	Internal Medicine	OB/GYN	Orthopedic Surgery	Pediatrics	Podiatry	Psychiatry	Radiology	General Surgery
Definitely would	14%	13	11	16	19	14	15	6	20	19	8	35	7	8
Probably would	35%	36	36	34	30	35	37	23	25	39	47	42	23	22
Probably would not	36%	37	38	34	38	35	34	51	42	31	30	15	45	45
Definitely would not	15%	14	16	16	14	16	14	20	14	11	15	8	26	25
Unweighted n	(2085)	(506)	(785)	(615)	(65)	(118)	(491)	(127)	(72)	(197)	(73)	(63)	(110)	(140)

3. Compared to five years ago, how much time are you able to spend with each patient on average?

	Total	Years in practice			Selected Fields of Medicine									
		5 to 10	11 to 20	Over 20	Anesthesiology	Family Practice	Internal Medicine	OB/GYN	Orthopedic Surgery	Pediatrics	Podiatry	Psychiatry	Radiology	General Surgery
More time	5%	5	4	6	7	5	6	2	9	4	6	4	5	4
About the same	36%	36	35	37	42	30	31	27	32	42	39	58	42	45
Less time	59%	59	61	58	52	65	63	71	59	55	55	38	53	51
Unweighted n	(2085)	(506)	(785)	(615)	(65)	(118)	(491)	(127)	(72)	(197)	(73)	(63)	(110)	(140)

4. Have you experienced any of the following in the past five years?

<i>Those saying "yes":</i>	Total	Years in practice			Selected Fields of Medicine									
		5 to 10	11 to 20	Over 20	Anesthesiology	Family Practice	Internal Medicine	OB/GYN	Orthopedic Surgery	Pediatrics	Podiatry	Psychiatry	Radiology	General Surgery
Stopped performing a specialty or procedure due to high malpractice premiums	30%	26	29	31	42	39	22	49	45	18	33	11	63	39
Seriously considered retiring early due to issues with administering a medical practice today	50%	36	47	58	51	55	47	63	47	46	57	35	57	65
Seriously considered relocating your practice to another state	32%	42	37	24	42	37	30	40	45	28	22	22	24	48
<i>Unweighted n</i>	<i>(2085)</i>	<i>(506)</i>	<i>(785)</i>	<i>(615)</i>	<i>(65)</i>	<i>(118)</i>	<i>(491)</i>	<i>(127)</i>	<i>(72)</i>	<i>(197)</i>	<i>(73)</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(110)</i>	<i>(140)</i>

Results for this poll are based on a mail survey conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in April 2007 with a statewide sample of 2,085 doctors. The sample was drawn from the full list of 20,444 doctors living in New Jersey who have been licensed by the state for at least five years. The list was provided by the New Jersey Board of Medical Examiners via the Department of Community Affairs. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

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