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Highlights

- More physicians in rural counties have plans to retire and/or reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months than physicians in urban counties.
- Central New York has the highest percentage of physicians with plans to retire in the next 12 months, while New York City and Long Island have the lowest.
- General surgeons and ob/gyns are more likely to report plans to retire and/or reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months compared to other specialties.

Background

The New York physician workforce is aging. Since 2002 the average age of a physician practicing in the state has increased from 50 to 52 years of age. Yet, little attention has been given to studying the ramifications of this change, such as the effects on physicians' retirement plans. This research brief examines New York physicians' plans to retire and/or reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months. Data for this brief were drawn from the Center for Health Workforce Studies' New York physician re-registration survey, which includes several questions pertaining to short-term practice plans.

Key Findings

More physicians in rural counties* have plans to retire and/or reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months than physicians in urban counties.

New York physicians practicing in rural counties were 57% more likely to have plans to retire than physicians practicing in urban counties (2.5% compared to 1.6%). Physicians in rural counties were also more likely to have plans to reduce patient care hours compared to physicians in urban counties (10.0% compared to 8.8%).

Central New York has the highest percentage of physicians with plans to retire in the next 12 months, while New York City and Long Island have the lowest.

The Central New York region had the highest percentage of physicians with plans to retire in the next 12 months (2.3%) and New York City had the lowest (1.5%). The following regions had higher percentages of physicians with plans to retire in the next 12 months compared to the state average: Western New York, Southern Tier, Hudson Valley, North Country, and Capital District. The Mohawk Valley region had the highest percentage of physicians with plans to reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months (11.3%) and the Capital District had the lowest (8.1%).

Plans to Retire and/or Reduce Patient Care Hours by Region, 2010

Region	Retire	Reduce Hours
Capital District	2.0%	8.1%
Central New York	2.3%	9.6%
Finger Lakes	1.7%	7.8%
Hudson Valley	2.1%	9.2%
Long Island	1.5%	8.6%
Mohawk Valley	1.9%	11.3%
New York City	1.5%	8.9%
North Country	2.0%	9.2%
Southern Tier	2.1%	10.3%
Western New York	2.1%	9.5%
New York State	1.7%	9.0%

Physicians working in solo practice are more than twice as likely to report plans to retire compared to physicians employed by hospitals or in group practices.

Among physicians working in solo practices, 2.4% reported plans to retire in the next 12 months and 13.7% had plans to reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months. In contrast, 1.1% of physicians working in hospitals and in group practice settings reported plans to retire and 6.6% had plans to reduce patient care hours.

* Counties with populations of less than 200,000 are considered rural and New York Department of Labor regions are used above.

General surgeons and ob/gyns are more likely to report plans to retire and/or reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months compared to other specialties.

Four percent (4.0%) of general surgeons and 2.6% of ob/gyns reported plans to retire in the next 12 months. About 16% of general surgeons and almost 14% of ob/gyns had plans to reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months. Among primary care physicians, 1.8% reported plans to retire in the next 12 months, and 9.7% had plans to reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months.

Male physicians are more likely to have plans to retire and/or reduce patient care hours than female physicians.

Male physicians were 42% more likely to report plans to retire in the next 12 months than their female counterparts (1.9 compared to 1.1%). They were also 34% more likely to have plans to reduce patient care hours than female physicians (10.0% compared to 6.6%). These differences were partially explained by the fact that, on average, male physicians were six years older than female physicians.

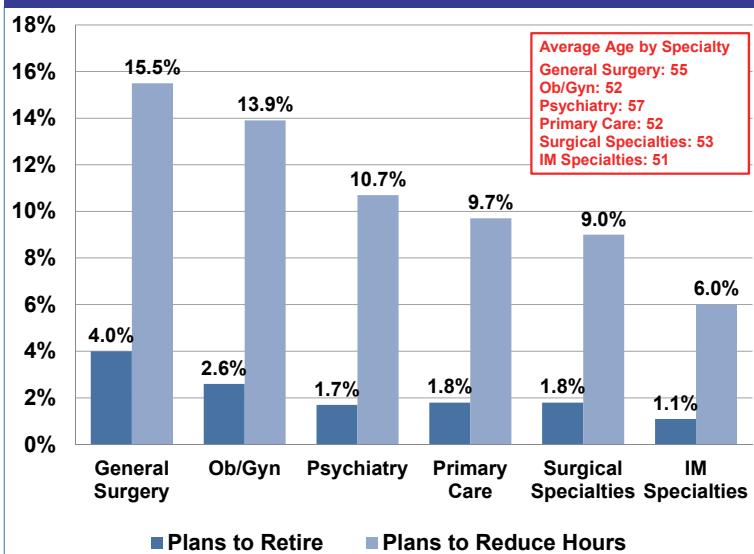
Despite being older, White (non-Hispanic) physicians are less likely to report plans to retire and/or reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months than physicians in other racial/ethnic groups.

Among White (non-Hispanic) physicians, 1.5% reported plans to retire in the next 12 months and 7.6% reported plans to reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months. In comparison, 1.6% of underrepresented minority physicians (Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native) had plans to retire in the next 12 months and 11.7% had plans to reduce patient care hours in the next 12 months.

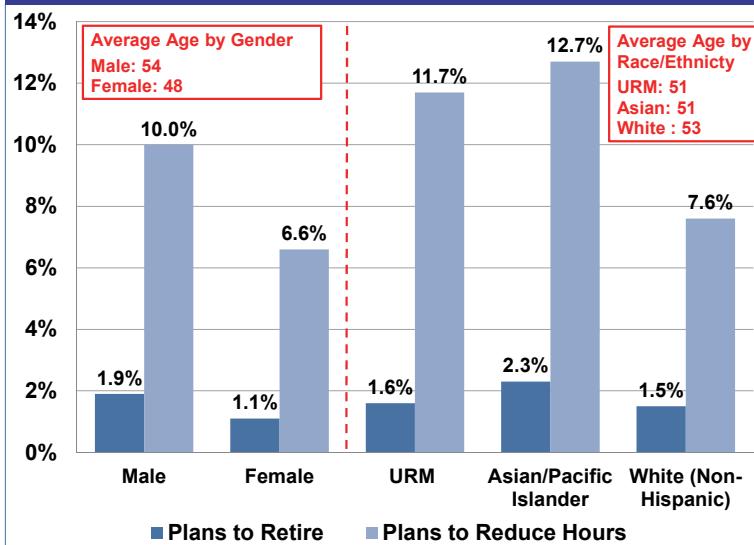
Conclusion

It is increasingly important to understand the effects of aging on the New York physician workforce. More physicians practicing in rural counties as well as more of those who practice general surgery and ob/gyn have plans to retire in the next 12 months compared to their counterparts in other parts of the state and in other specialties. These patterns have broad implications for state and local stakeholders and policy makers as physician workforce capacity may be growing or shrinking at different rates in certain parts of the state and in certain specialties. It is essential to take these patterns into account in developing strategies to assure an adequate supply of physicians in New York.

Plans to Retire and/or Reduce Patient Care Hours by Specialty, 2010



Plans to Retire and/or Reduce Patient Care Hours by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 2010



The Center for Health Workforce Studies

This brief was prepared by the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the School of Public Health, University at Albany, State University of New York. Center staff who worked on this brief included David Armstrong, Gaetano Forte, and Jean Moore. The New York physician re-registration survey is part of the Center's New York Health Workforce Data System, which is designed to support ongoing monitoring of the state's health workforce. Web site: <http://chws.albany.edu>