The number of physicians trained in US medical schools is not sufficient to meet national demand. Many US health care institutions turn to international medical graduates (IMGs) to supplement their physician workforce. Currently, 1 in 4 physicians practicing in the United States were trained at foreign medical schools. IMGs, while contributing greatly to the access to care for Americans, especially vulnerable populations, often face significant challenges around immigration policies and procedures, adaptation to US graduate medical education and health care system, and planning and advising for post-residency work. New York (NY) has the largest number of medical residency positions in the nation with only ~50% staying in NY post-residency. The objective of this study was to assess post-residency practice characteristics of IMGs to understand what motivates IMGs to stay in NY.

The annual survey of physicians in NY completing a residency or fellowship training program (NY resident exit survey) provides information about training outcomes, practice plans of new physicians, and the demand for new physicians. This study utilized the resident exit survey data from 2012, 2017, and 2022.

The study assessed trends in NY residents by citizenship, and explored the main reasons why they are not choosing to practice in NY or the most influential incentives to accept practice positions within NY. The study also explored the requirement for service obligation, education debt, and level of satisfaction with compensation. The focus of IMGs in this study is only non-US IMGs.

RESULTS

Residents by Citizenship

**Main Reasons Why Residents Are Not Choosing to Practice in NY**
- For native-born US citizens, the main reason for leaving NY post-residency in all 3 study years was 'proximity to family'.
- In 2017 and 2022, the second main reason was 'better salary'.

**Level of Satisfaction With Salary/Compensation**
- For native-born US citizens, the 'somewhat satisfied' level of compensation increased from 44% in 2012 to 47% in 2017 and again in 2022; the 'very satisfied' level of compensation increased from 5.26% in 2012 to 20.8% in 2017 to 28.3% in 2022.

**Most Influential Incentives in Decision to Accept a Practice Position**
- For native-born US citizens, the first and second most influential incentives to accept a practice position in all 3 study years were 'income guarantees' and 'career development opportunities'.

**Service Obligations**
- Over 98% of all native-born US citizens had no service obligation in all 3 study years.
- 22.6% of H-visa holders had service obligations in 2012, which reduced to 16.7% in 2017 and to 14.9% in 2022.
- ~80% of J-visa holders had service obligations in all 3 study years.

**Education Debt**
- While education debt was more common for native-born US citizens, the percentage of residents who had education debt ≥$300,000 increased from 8.2% in 2012 to 30.8% in 2022, as did the percentage of residents with no education debt from 20.8% in 2017 to 28.3% in 2022.

DISCUSSION

For H-visa holders and J-visa holders, the number one most influential incentive was 'H-1 visa sponsorship' and 'J-1 visa waiver', respectively. US citizens were consistently more likely to report 'very satisfied' with compensation compared to H-visa holders and J-visa holders.

Residents with the lowest percentage of service obligations were native-born US citizens. J-visa holders had the highest percentage of service obligations, which can be attributed to IMGs participating in J-1 visa waivers.

CONCLUSION

There needs to be more robust policies and programs to support IMGs in NY to ensure retention of IMGs within NY post-residency, such as expansion of the Conrad-30 program and the New York Physician Loan Repayment and Physician Practice Support Programs, to include IMGs in addition to US citizens and permanent residents.

REFERENCES


To ensure their retention in NY post-residency, there needs to be robust policies and programs which support IMGs.