



Healthcare Association
of New York State

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WILLIAM VAN SLYKE
(518) 431-7770

Report Finds Serious Physician Shortage at New York Hospitals, Expected to Worsen

Hospitals Reducing and Eliminating Services Due to Doctors Retiring, Leaving State

ALBANY, N.Y. – Hospitals across the state are facing a serious physician shortage that is expected to worsen as the pace of physician departures and retirements accelerates, and hospitals are having problems recruiting new doctors, according to a new report by the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS).

The [2011 Physician Advocacy Survey](#), which focused on the physician shortage outside of New York City, found 34% of hospitals had to reduce or eliminate services in the past two years due to a lack of doctors. Sixty-six percent reported there were times when the shortage left their emergency department without coverage for certain specialties, such as orthopedics and neurology, requiring a transfer to another hospital for treatment.

The shortage is particularly acute in rural areas, with the added recruitment challenges of geographic location, weather, and professional isolation. More than half of the rural counties in New York State reported a decrease in one or more categories of crucially needed physicians, and six rural counties (Chemung, Chenango, Greene, Herkimer, Seneca, and Ulster) saw a decline in the number of primary care physicians.

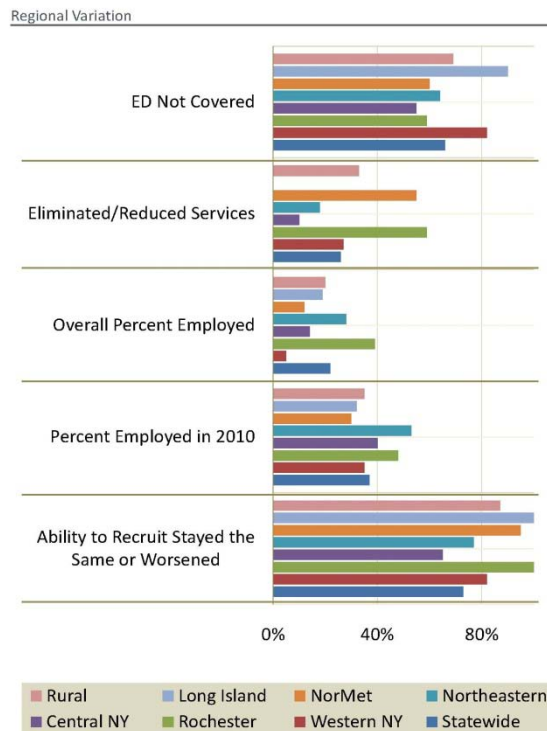
“Every patient deserves a doctor,” said HANYS’ President Daniel Sisto. “We must have policies in place to motivate and recruit physicians to practice in New York State, particularly in the communities that need them the most.”

In 2010, nearly 2,300 physicians left or retired from hospitals, compared to 1,600 in 2009, and an estimated 510 are expected to retire in 2011. With the average age of practicing physicians at 52, and 16% over the age of 65, the pace of retirements is expected to accelerate in coming years, exacerbating the shortage.

Mr. Sisto noted the importance of preventing cuts to successful training and recruitment programs such as Medicare Graduate Medical Education and Doctors Across New York (DANY), a state-funded initiative to help train and place doctors in underserved areas. He also emphasized the need for programs such as DANY to be implemented in an easier-to-access manner so that funds can be utilized effectively, as well as for New York State to seriously address the workforce recommendations of the Medicaid Redesign Team.

Statewide, hospitals reported that they had the most difficulty recruiting psychiatrists, urologists, orthopedics, internal medicine sub-specialists, obstetrics/gynecology and primary care doctors. The survey found key recruitment barriers continue to be the lack of competitive salary, lack of candidates, geographic location, and lack of opportunity for spouse. National reports estimate the average medical student debt at around \$160,000.

The report also showed some areas of the state are experiencing a much greater shortage than others. In the Rochester area, 59% of hospitals reported they had to reduce or eliminate services in 2010, compared to a statewide average of 26%. In Western New York, 82% responded there were times their emergency department did not have specialty coverage, requiring patient transfers, compared to 66% statewide.



A total of 109 member hospitals outside of New York City responded to the survey, with 90% of the state’s rural hospitals responding.

The [Healthcare Association of New York State \(HANYS\)](#) is the only statewide hospital and continuing care association in New York State, representing more than 500 non-profit and public hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, and other health care organizations.