

Editorials

Graham Center Policy One-Pagers Provide Perspectives on the State of Primary Care

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See related Graham Center Policy One-Pager on page 133.

For more than two decades, *American Family Physician* (AFP) has published a continuing series of policy briefs from the American Academy of Family Physicians' Robert Graham Center.¹ Based in Washington, D.C., the Graham Center creates and curates evidence to inform policies that support primary care and family medicine. Most of the work of the Graham Center is derived from questions coming directly from practicing physicians.

Previous Graham Center Policy One-Pagers published in AFP have provided timely perspectives on a range of topics, such as family physicians' contributions to the care of infants, children, and older adults²⁻⁴; attributes that patients most value in their family physicians⁵; effects of income disparities on medical student specialty choice⁶; and the underutilization of family physicians in addressing the opioid epidemic.⁷

In 2020, the Graham Center, in collaboration with IBM Watson Health and the American Board of Family Medicine, produced a chartbook of statistics on the current state of primary care in the United States.⁸ This issue of AFP features a Graham Center Policy One-Pager derived from this chartbook, demonstrating a wide variation in the ratio of primary care physicians to population by state, with the two highest states (Maine and Vermont) having more than twice the ratio of the lowest (Mississippi).⁹

Subsequent issues of AFP will feature additional analyses of primary care physicians' employment status and scope of practice. These brief reports aim to inform AFP's readers about the demographics and practice circumstances of U.S. family physicians and primary care clinicians, as well as provide evidence from research

to support advocacy for primary care and population health.

Primary care is at a critical juncture. A consensus report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recently affirmed the foundational role of primary care in optimizing individual and population health and called on state and national policy makers to make high-quality primary care "a common good that is accessible to everyone."^{10,11} A recent editorial in AFP described the collaboration of several primary care physician societies and boards, including the American Academy of Family Physicians, to create a new health care payment paradigm with the principles of primary care serving as the backbone.¹² Although the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the impressive versatility of family medicine to meet changing health system needs, it has also dangerously stretched practice finances and challenged the resilience of many primary care physicians, with 71% reporting all-time high levels of burnout or mental exhaustion.¹³

The primary care chartbook is just one of many resources that remind us of the central role family physicians have in helping our communities thrive. The Graham Center will continue to research the myriad important issues faced in family medicine: payment, workforce, education and training, burnout, and joy of practice. The editors of AFP hope to hear from you. Please share your successes and questions by emailing afpjournal@aafp.org.

Editor's Note: Dr. Lin is deputy editor of AFP.

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