



## Survey: Physician Practice Patterns Changing As A Result Of COVID-19

April 22, 2020

48% Using Telemedicine, 32% to Change Jobs, Retire, Temporarily Close, or Opt Out of Patient Care

DALLAS, April 22, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Close to half of all physicians (48%) are treating patients through telemedicine, up from 18% in 2018, while many plan to change jobs, opt out of patient care roles or retire in response to the COVID-19 epidemic, according to a new survey.

Conducted by Merritt Hawkins, the nation's leading physician search firm and a company of AMN Healthcare, in collaboration with The Physicians Foundation, a nonprofit advancing the work of physicians, the survey offers insights into how physicians are being affected by and are responding to COVID-19. Findings from the survey include:



- 38% of physicians are seeing COVID-19 patients
- 60% of physicians who are not seeing COVID-19 patients are willing to do so
- 21% of physicians have been furloughed or experienced a pay cut
- 14% plan to change practice settings as a result of COVID-19
- 18% plan to retire, temporarily close their practices, or opt out of patient care
- 30% who are treating COVID-19 patients are feeling great stress but will continue to see patients

"The impact on physicians from COVID-19 is going to be transformative," said Travis Singleton, Executive Vice President of Merritt Hawkins. "The way patients access physicians and how and where physicians practice will fundamentally change."

About one-third of physicians (32%) indicated that they will change practice settings, leave patient care roles, temporarily shut their practices or retire in response to COVID-19. This should be of particular concern to hospitals and other healthcare organizations already struggling with physician shortages and turnover, according to Singleton.

"Once the pandemic has been contained there will be a backlog of procedures and pervasive Covid-19 testing. Physician reengagement and retention will be of even more importance," Singleton said.

"Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, physicians were expressing dissatisfaction in their jobs and experiencing high rates of burnout and mental health issues caused by stressors like regulatory burdens and EHR use," said Gary Price M.D., President of The Physicians Foundation. "The pandemic is straining physicians further and we need to prioritize providing solutions that will ease the financial and emotional burdens they are feeling as a means to improve their wellbeing now and after the crisis is resolved. It is the least we can do for the health care workers who are risking their lives to take care of everyone else."

A positive takeaway of the survey is, of the physicians who are currently not treating COVID-19 patients, 60% are willing to do so and one-third (34%) have more time due to the decline in office visits resulting from the pandemic.

### Use of Telemedicine Rising

According to The Physicians Foundation's 2018 [Survey of America's Physicians](#) conducted by Merritt Hawkins, approximately 18% of physicians indicated they were using telemedicine to treat patients. That number has increased to 48%, according to the new survey. The use of telemedicine has been rapidly accelerated by the COVID-19 epidemic, which has spurred changes to reimbursement policies that had previously limited its use, according to Singleton.

The Physicians Foundation, in collaboration with the American Medical Association, is supporting ways to ensure patients and physicians are able to stay connected during the pandemic, such as [The Telehealth Initiative](#).

"One positive result of the pandemic is that barriers to accessing physician services through telemedicine may be reduced, which will be critical as the nation deals with a growing physician shortage," said Singleton.

### About Survey Methodology

Survey data is based on responses from 842 physicians across the country and the survey has margin of error rate of +/- 3.5%. Further information about the survey can be accessed at [www.merrithawkins.com](http://www.merrithawkins.com) or [www.physiciansfoundation.org](http://www.physiciansfoundation.org).

### About Merritt Hawkins

Merritt Hawkins is the leading physician search and consulting firm in the United States and is a company of AMN Healthcare (NYSE: AMN). AMN Healthcare is the leader and innovator in total talent solutions to healthcare organizations across the nation, providing access to the most comprehensive network of quality healthcare professionals through its innovative recruitment strategies and breadth of career opportunities. For more information, visit [www.merrithawkins.com](http://www.merrithawkins.com) and [www.amnhealthcare.com](http://www.amnhealthcare.com).

### About The Physicians Foundation

The Physicians Foundation is a nonprofit seeking to advance the work of practicing physicians and help them facilitate the delivery of high-quality health care to patients. As the health care system in America continues to evolve, The Physicians Foundation is steadfast in its determination to strengthen the physician-patient relationship and assist physicians in sustaining their medical practices in today's practice environment. It pursues its mission through a variety of activities including grant-making, research, white papers and policy studies. Since 2005, the Foundation has awarded

numerous multi-year grants totaling more than \$50 million. In addition, the Foundation focuses on the following core areas: physician leadership, physician wellness, physician practice trends, social determinants of health and the impact of health care reform on physicians and patients. For more information, visit [physiciansfoundation.org](http://physiciansfoundation.org).

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