

Profile of Active Hospice and Palliative Medicine Physicians, 2016

By

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Executive Summary

- As of January 2016 there were nearly 6,400 active HPM physicians as reported by the American Medical Association (AMA), of which the vast majority (93.5%) was focused on patient care. Among physicians who have achieved subspecialty certification in HPM from 2008 through 2015, 4,200 were certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM), 1,723 were certified by the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM), and 234 were certified by the American Board of Pediatrics (ABP).
- On average across the United States, there were 15.7 HPM physicians per 100,000 people aged 65 years and older.
- Overall, HPM physicians are younger than the general physician workforce. Thirty-six percent were 55 years or older in 2014 compared with 43% for all active physicians. Physicians entering training in HPM generally are older than for other specialties (36.2 years vs 30.2 years, respectively), so this likely reflects the relatively recent recognition of the specialty by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and American Osteopathic Association (AOA).

- Representation of women in HPM is rapidly increasing. Overall, 53% of active HPM physicians are men, but 61.7% of HPM fellows are women. Men are the majority for age groups 50 years and older, and women are the majority for age groups younger than 50 years.
- Although the race and ethnicity composition of practicing HPM physicians is not readily available, black/African American physicians are 4.5% of HPM fellows compared with 5.3% of all physicians from 2010 through 2012. Hispanics/Latinos are 7.7% of HPM fellows compared with 6% of all physicians from 2010 through 2012.
- US allopathic medical school graduates (MDs) represent 67.9% of all active HPM physicians and 62.8% of fellows. International medical school graduates (IMGs) represent 26.4% of practicing HPMs and 21.9% of fellows. The representation of DOs in HPM is rapidly increasing. Only 5.8% of active HPMs are DOs compared with 15.3% of HPM fellows.
- The supply of HPM physicians is not distributed evenly across the country, and wide variation by region can be seen in the ratio of number of HPM physicians per 100,000 people 65 years and older. Analyzing the distribution by the Dartmouth Hospital Referral Regions (HRRs), in 2016 the bottom quartile of HRRs had between 0 and 8.5 HPM physicians per 100,000 people aged 65 years and older, and the top quartile of HRRs had between 17.3 and 55 HPM physicians per 100,000 people who were 65 years and older.
- The supply of HPM physicians likely will increase significantly in coming years. Although it is difficult to predict, in part because the number of HPM fellowship positions has more than doubled in the past 8 years, continued growth is likely. At the current number of physicians trained in HPM fellowship programs—about 300 new fellows per year—about 1,500 new HPM physicians would enter the workforce per 5-year cohort, compared with 900 or fewer practicing HPM physicians in the 55 to 59 years and 60 to 64 years age cohorts who may retire.