

## **Facts At A Glance: About Graduate Medical Education**

- Residents are physicians who have successfully completed postgraduate medical school and received a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) degree. By undergoing residency training, physicians receive the specialized training required to achieve board certification in a specific specialty area.
- Every state licensing agency requires successful completion of at least one full year (many states require more than one year) of ACGME-accredited training before they will grant a doctor a license to practice independently.
- Medical residency programs offer in-depth training and direct clinical care of patients under the supervision of fully licensed physicians within a specific branch of medicine, compared to medical schools, which teach physicians a broad range of medical knowledge and basic clinical skills.
- Residency training can last from three to seven years, depending on the specialty. After residency, physicians may decide to complete a fellowship to become a subspecialist. This requires an additional one to four years of supervised training in their area of expertise.
- More than 8,800 medical residency programs in over 130 specialties and subspecialties are now accredited by the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). There are more than 111,000 residents and fellows training in these programs.
- Primary Board Certification, requiring successful completion of the entire ACGME accredited training program, is available in the following specialties: allergy and immunology, anesthesiology, colon and rectal surgery, dermatology, emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, medical genetics, neurological surgery, neurology, nuclear medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, ophthalmology, orthopaedic surgery, otolaryngology, pathology, pediatrics, physical medicine and rehabilitation, plastic surgery, preventive medicine, psychiatry, radiation oncology, radiology, surgery, thoracic surgery and urology.
- Today, one in every five physicians in the U.S. is a medical resident or fellow.
- Specialty training with the largest percentage of residents on duty is internal medicine (24.6 percent), followed by family medicine (10.6 percent), pediatrics (8.9 percent) and surgery (8 percent)<sup>1</sup>.
- Specialty training with the largest percentage of women residents in 2008-2009 were obstetrics and gynecology (74 percent), pediatrics (63 percent), and dermatology (62 percent). Comparatively few women were in the subspecialties of thoracic surgery (15 percent), neurological surgery (12 percent) and orthopedic surgery (12 percent)<sup>2</sup>.
- There has been a steady decrease in hours worked by practicing physicians per week over the last decade. According to a new report published in the *Journal of the American Medical*

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<sup>1</sup> 2008-2009 ACGME Data Resource Book

<sup>2</sup> 2008-2009 ACGME Data Resource Book

*Association*, practicing physicians now work an average of 51 hours a week<sup>3</sup>.

- During the last decade, hours on duty decreased significantly for both residents (9.8 percent) and practicing physicians working outside the hospital (5.7 percent)<sup>4</sup>.
- Resident work hours remained high through 2002 and then decreased sharply after ACGME instituted standards for all accredited residency programs<sup>5</sup>, limiting the work week to 80 hours, averaged over a period of four weeks.
- Today, residents typically spend one night in four in the hospital being “on call.”
- While on duty in an emergency department, a resident’s shift is limited to 12 hours.

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<sup>3</sup> Staiger DO, Auerbach DA, Buerhaus PI. Trends in the Work Hours of Physicians in the United States. JAMA 2010;303(8): 747-753.

<sup>4</sup> Staiger DO, Auerbach DA, Buerhaus PI. Trends in the Work Hours of Physicians in the United States. JAMA 2010;303(8): 747-753.

<sup>5</sup> Staiger DO, Auerbach DA, Buerhaus PI. Trends in the Work Hours of Physicians in the United States. JAMA 2010;303(8): 747-753.