

# Who Will Care For Our Patients?

2008 Update: Taking Action to Fight a Growing Physician Shortage in Wisconsin

## **Executive Summary**

This report is an update of the 2004 report *Who Will Care for Our Patients?* It reassesses the physician workforce in today's environment, estimates the supply and demand for physician services in 2020 and 2030, and makes recommendations on addressing future shortages.

### **Current Environment**

There is currently a shortage of primary physicians in rural and inner-city areas of Wisconsin. Specifically, there is a shortage of primary care physicians in rural Wisconsin, and in Milwaukee in the Health Professional Shortage Areas.

### **Estimates of Future Supply and Demand**

A number of separate projections of supply and demand were made for the years 2020 and 2030.

- Demand is estimated to increase by 9 percent to as much as 33 percent by 2020, and 13 percent upwards to nearly 65 percent by 2030.
- Supply is projected to increase by 13 percent by 2020, and 21 percent by 2030. A separate projection for primary care physicians shows a 5 percent increase by 2020, and an 8 percent increase by 2030.
- The most likely scenario shows a small shortfall in 2030 for all physicians, with the worst-case shortfall of 44 percent. However, for primary care physicians, the most likely scenario predicts shortfalls of 8 percent by 2020, and 14 percent by 2030. The worst-case shortfall is 57 percent.

### **Recommended Actions**

A number of actions are recommended to address the expected shortage of health care professionals, in particular primary care providers.

- Develop an infrastructure to gather data sufficient to aid in understanding the current and future physician workforce.
- Expand the membership of the Wisconsin Council on Medical Education and Workforce (WCMEW) to include a representative of the inner-city Milwaukee provider community.
- Greatly expand existing tuition reimbursement programs to target primary care physicians and specialists who stay and practice in Wisconsin.
- Lobby Congress to increase the number of Wisconsin residency programs that receive Medicare reimbursement.
- Increase the number of slots at schools producing Advanced Practice Provider (APP) graduates. Recruit, train and mentor APP candidates who will practice in the inner-city areas of Wisconsin's urban areas; in particular, Milwaukee. Break down barriers between medical schools and allied health schools to maximize resources and to eliminate duplicative programs.
- Sponsor or fund research on the medical home model.
- Establish an inner-city version of the WARM program, aimed at recruiting and training individuals who are likely to practice in inner-city Milwaukee.
- Increase Medicaid payment for physician specialist services provided in the inner-city areas of Milwaukee.
- Preserve Wisconsin's favorable malpractice climate.