

RURAL PRACTICE OUT OF VOGUE

Residents show little interest in small town practice or HMOs.

GRADUATING RESIDENTS ARE MOSTLY inclined to practice in urban settings—to the point that literally none are interested in practicing in a community of 10,000 or fewer inhabitants. These urban tendencies were discovered in a survey of medical residents in their final year of training by Merritt Hawkins & Associates, a national physician search firm based in Dallas, Texas. The survey, conducted in the first half of 2001, asked 300 residents about their practice plans. Fifty percent of the surveyed residents were in primary care, and the other 50 percent were in anesthesiology, cardiology, dermatology, gastroenterology, general surgery, hematology/oncology, orthopaedic surgery, and radiology.

Between 1999 and 2001, residents' interest in practicing in towns of fewer than 10,000 people has dropped from little to none. Since 70 percent of these physicians indicated that geographic location was their top priority in choosing a practice opportunity, it would seem that small towns needing physicians will have their work cut out for them in recruiting new doctors.

Merritt, Hawkins & Associates president James Merritt says, "Most new doctors want to practice within 50 miles of where they trained, where they grew up, or where their spouse grew up. With fewer physicians coming from small communities, there are fewer candidates familiar with and attracted to small town life."

Regarding in what practice setting these residents would like to join, interest in practicing in solo or partnership settings has risen in the past two years. Like small towns, however, practicing in HMOs now holds little appeal for physicians. ■

Source: Year 2001 Survey of Final-Year Medical Residents. Merritt, Hawkins & Associates.

SIZE OF COMMUNITY

In what size community would you like to practice?

POPULATION	2001	1999	1997	1995
10,000 or less	0%	4%	5%	8%
11,000-25,000	8%	7%	5%	9%
26,000-50,000	13%	12%	22%	10%
51,000-100,000	21%	22%	19%	10%
101,000-250,000	15%	21%	22%	14%
251,000-500,000	25%	18%	13%	12%
501,000-1 million	12%	10%	11%	26%
Over 1 million	6%	6%	3%	11%

PRACTICE SETTING

In which one of the following would you most like to practice?

SETTING	2001	1999	1997	1995
Solo	8%	4%	2%	6%
Partnership	21%	15%	13%	9%
Association	0%	2%	5%	4%
HMO	1%	1%	5%	8%
Hospital Employee	3%	8%	4%	9%
Single Specialty Group	24%	31%	29%	39%
Multi-Specialty Group	28%	25%	33%	14%
Outpatient Clinic	8%	8%	6%	N/A
Locum Tenens	3%	0%	1%	N/A
Other (Urgent Care, Student Health, Corporate, etc.)	4%	6%	2%	11%

TYPE OF COMPENSATION

Which of the following would you prefer at the start of your practice?

METHOD	2001	1999	1997	1995
Salary	30%	22%	14%	N/A
Salary w/Production Bonus	62%	61%	72%	55%
100% Productivity	5%	5%	2%	N/A
Income Guarantee	3%	12%	11%	41%
Bank Loan	0%	0%	1%	4%