Dean’s Comments: Physician Shortage in Texas

The Physician Workforce debate has been around for a long time, and it remains an important topic today.

In 1996, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) issued a report titled, "The Nation’s Physician Workforce: Options for Balancing Supply and Requirements". This report, and many other articles discussing the physician workforce issues, stated that the United States had a surplus of physicians. The report went on to say that the rising number of physicians would have negative consequences on our population and warned that concrete steps needed to be taken immediately. Recommendations varied from admitting fewer medical students, to restricting Graduate Medical Education (GME), to limiting the immigration of foreign-trained physicians.

In April 2006, Texans were presented with Code Red: the Critical Condition of Health in Texas. This report, released by the Task Force on Access to Health Care in Texas and commissioned by Dr. Kenneth Shine, UT Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs, was an eye opener for many.

Since the IOM report, the "Code Red" report and the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) Statement on Physician Workforce, among others, have determined that the 1996 predictions were inaccurate. The "Code Red" report told us that the overall health condition of Texans is poor - that we have a significant shortage of health care professionals. The inaccuracies have been attributed to the assumption in 1996 that managed care would drastically alter delivery of care and to the fact that there has been very little to no convincing documentation that this surplus exists.

In the past two decades, enrollment at medical schools has remained flat. Schools of Medicine in Texas are experiencing the same issues – but on a larger scale. With the substantial population growth we are experiencing, we will not be able to meet physician demands by the year 2015. The "Code Red" report recommends that we increase the number of physicians graduating from our medical schools by 20 percent; this is 5 percent more than the national increase recommended by the AAMC and the American Medical Association (AMA). In addition to the basic shortage problem, we also have a maldistribution problem. The rural areas in Texas remain substantially underserved.

The question then becomes, do we fund more Schools of Medicine or provide more GME’s to increase the number of physicians? The argument for increasing funding to the Schools of Medicine supports the belief that if we increase enrollment now, we will increase the percentage of students that we are turning out into the field. An expansion of medical school loan repayment plans for students who provide care in public institutions or in institutions whose patient population is more than 50 percent uninsured is an option that may serve a dual purpose - to increase the overall number of physicians and to increase the diversity of students that enter the medical profession. However, a stronger argument has been made that increasing the number of physicians cannot happen without an increase in residency training. The AMA states that "for a graduate of a Texas medical school who obtains a residency within the state, the probability is 85 percent that the physician will practice in Texas". This is substantial. We have also seen that physicians who complete their residencies in underserved areas often stay and establish practices in those areas. Another factor that cannot be ignored is that the cost of education for residents is substantially lower than the cost of educating a medical student. Residents play a critical role in providing patient care and are a major source of highly qualified well-trained physicians without which many of our hospitals could not function.

The Physician Workforce debate is ongoing; however, the "Code Red" report has clearly shown us that now is the time for us to band together and take the bold steps necessary to protect the health of our state. This report called for "academic health institutions, state and local governments, communities, foundations and the private sector to support the development of health science research programs to study cost-effective health care and other characteristics of a high quality and efficient health system". At UTHSCSA, we have increased class size this year by about 10% (from 200 to 220 students). Further, we are working to increase the number of residency slots in several areas. Our goal is to be responsive to the Texas physician shortage, and to be particularly responsive to the need for physicians in traditionally underserved areas.

William L. Henrich, M.D., M.A.C.P.
Dean, School of Medicine
Vice President for Medical Affairs
John P. Howe, III, M.D.,
Distinguished Chair in Health Policy
Welcome New Faculty

Anesthesiology
Dr. Byron Anson joined on July 23, 2007 as a Clinical Instructor. He received his medical degree from UTHSCSA in 2003 and completed an internship in 2004. He will be completing his anesthesia residency from our program in June 2007.

Dr. Michael Little joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. He received his medical degree from UTHSCSA in 2003 and completed internship in 2004. He will be completing his anesthesia residency from our program in June 2007.

Family & Community Medicine
Ms. Debra G. Carr joined on July 1, 2007 as a Faculty Associate. She is a 2006 graduate from UTHSCSA Graduate Program in Nursing. In addition, she received a Master of Arts in Health Services Management in May 1992 from Webster University.

Medicine
Dr. Samia Benslimane joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. She received her medical degree from UTHSCSA in 2004 and will be completing her residency training from our program in June 2007.

Dr. Kiran Cheruku joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. He received his Medical Education from Kakatiya Medical College in 1995 and completed his residency training at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2003.

Dr. Benjamin J. Daniel joined on July 1, 2007 in the Division of Medical Oncology as an Instructor. Dr. Daniel received his PhD from Baylor University in 2005.

Dr. Jason M. McKinney joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. He received his medical degree from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in 2004 and completed his residency training from UTHSCSA in 2005.

Dr. Augusto Parra joined on July 1, 2007 as an Assistant Professor. He received his medical degree from Escuela Colombiana de Medicina in Bogota, Columbia in 1988 and obtained a Master in Public Health from Harvard University School of Public Health in 1992. He has completed an academic internship in Internal Medicine and residency in Combined Neurology in 1999. He then completed a fellowship in Critical Care Neurology and Stroke in 2001.

Dr. Rene A. Oliveros joined on June 18, 2007 as an Assistant Professor. He received his medical degree from San Marcos University in 1966 and completed his residency training in 1969.

Dr. Fang-Ying Lin joined the Division of Nephrology on July 1, 2007 as an Assistant Professor. She received her medical degree from the UT Medical Branch in Galveston in 2002 and completed her residency at UTHSCSA in 2005.

Dr. Joseph P. Murgo joined the Division of Cardiology on July 1, 2007 as an Assistant Professor. He received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1966 and completed his residency training at the Passavant Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Randy P. Wright joined the Division of Gastroenterology on July 16, 2007 as an Instructor. He received his medical degree in 2004 and completed his residency from UTHSCSA in 2007.

KUDOS!!! The following faculty, fellows and/or students appeared in the news (television, print media or radio): Dr. Ruth Berggren, School of Medicine; Dr. Patricia Chalela, Institute/Health Promotion Research; Dr. Francisco Cigarroa, President; Dr. Chris Coppola, Pediatrics; Dr. George Crawford, Medicine/Infectious Diseases; Dr. Tyler Curiel, Medical Oncology; Dr. Sharon Fowler, Medicine/Epidemiology; Dr. Reza Ghohestani, Medicine/Dermatology; Dr. Francis J. Giles, Medicine/Medical Oncology; Dr. Steven Haffner, Medicine/Epidemiology; Dr. Monica Horton, Medicine/Geriatrics; Dr. Anthony Infante, Pediatrics; Dr. David Jimenez, Department of Neurosurgery; Dr. Nancy Kellogg, Pediatrics/Center For Miracles; Dr. Joel Michalek, Epidemiology/Biostatistics; Dr. Julio Palmaz, Radiology; Dr. Kristen Plastino, OB/GYN; Dr. Steven Pliszka, Psychiatry; Dr. Wajeh Quinibi, Medicine/Renal Diseases; Dr. Amelie Ramirez, Epidemiology & Biostatistics Multicultural; Dr. I. Jon Russell, Medicine/Clinical Immunology; Dr. Francis Spiller, Medicine; Dr. Ian Thompson, Urology; Dr. Richard P. Usatine, Family/Community Medicine; Dr. Abraham Verghese, Center for Med. Humanities/Ethics
Welcome New Faculty

Neurosurgery

Dr. John D. Day joined on July 1, 2007 as an Assistant Professor. He received his medical degree from the University of Washington in 1989. He then completed his internship and residency in Neurosurgery in 1989-1996. He completed his fellowship in Cranial Base Surgery and Anatomy at University of Vienna Medical School in 1994-1995.

Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. G. Nicoleta Prisacaru joined on July 1, 2007 as an Assistant Professor. She received her medical degree from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in 1992 and then she completed an internship in general surgery in 1994. She graduated from our residency program in June 2007.

Dr. Darren M. Farley joined on July 1, 2007 as an Assistant Instructor. He received his medical degree from the University of Kansas Medical School in 2003 and completed his residency training from the University of Kansas-Wichita in June 2007.

Ophthalmology

Dr. Grace C. Lindhorst joined on July 1, 2007 as a Clinical Instructor. She received her medical degree here at UTHSCSA in 2003 and then completed an internship in Internal Medicine in 2004. She completed her residency from our program in June 2007.

Dr. William J. Flynn joined on July 1, 2007 as a Clinical Professor. He received his medical degree from Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences at Bethesda in 1990 and completed his internship at Malcolm Grow Medical Center in 1991. He completed his residency training in Ophthalmology at Wilford Hall Medical Center in 1995. He then went on to Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center to get his fellowship training in 1996.

Orthopaedics (continues)

Dr. Roberto Rodriguez joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. He received his medical degree from California College of Podiatric Medicine in 2004. He completed his residency in June 2007 from UTHSCSA.

Pediatrics

Dr. Heather K. Chandler joined on July 1, 2007 as a Clinical Assistant Professor. She received her medical degree from Baylor College of Medicine in 2003. She completed her residency training from Baylor College of Medicine in 2005 and completed her residency training at UTHSCSA in 2006.

Dr. Melissa DeLario joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. Dr. DeLario received her medical degree from UTHSCSA 2004. She completed both her internship and residency training from our program.

Radiology

Dr. Jeffrey A. Helmcamp joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. He received his medical degree from UTHSCSA in 2002 and completed his radiology residency from the University of Texas at Houston in 2007.

Dr. Andres Rahal joined on July 1, 2007 as an Assistant Professor. He received his medical degree from Instituto de Ciencias de la Salud in 1995 and is completing his residency in June 2007.

Dr. Rong Zeng joined on July 1, 2007 as an Instructor. She received her medical degree from the Texas A&M College of Medicine in 2002 and then completed an internship at The University of Texas Health Science Center-Houston in 2003 and completed an internship in 2003. She then completed her diagnostic radiology from our program in 2007.

Surgery

Dr. Steven R. Granger joined on July 1, 2007 as a Clinical Instructor. He received his medical degree from the University of Utah School of Medicine in 2001 and completed a research fellowship at the University of Utah School of Medicine in 2004. He then completed his internship and general surgery residency from the same program in 2007.

Ms. Monica DeWitte joined on July 9, 2007 as a Faculty Associate. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Marion College in 1988. She then attended The University of Phoenix and earned her Masters of Science in Nursing in 2005.
FOCAL POINTS: Transplant Center

The Transplant Center continues to be a vibrant multi-disciplinary clinical, educational, and research center. The liver transplant division celebrated its 1000th liver transplant this year - a history encompassing fifteen years.

Juan Guerrero MD joined Vince Speeg MD as our second transplant hepatologist in 2006, and we are currently recruiting a third transplant hepatologist. The renal transplant program is nearing its 40th anniversary and is on a pace to perform a record number of kidney transplants this year under the leadership of Greg Abrahamian and Chuck Nolan. We now have a dedicated living donor nurse coordinator, Carmen Nolan, who has had a large positive impact on the living donor component of the renal transplant program. Over 90% of living donor nephrectomies are performed laparoscopically. Drs. Glenn Halff and Ken Washburn are also expanding the laparoscopic liver resection program.

Satellite clinics are currently staffed in McAllen, El Paso, and Corpus Christi with plans to open clinics in New Braunfels and Austin in the next 12 months.

The Center is well represented at the national transplant policy level with Dr. Glenn Halff currently on the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) Board of Directors, Dr. Ken Washburn recently appointed as vice-chair of the national UNOS Liver Committee, and Dr. Greg Abrahamian on the Living Donor UNOS Committee. Drs. Halff, Esterl and Washburn serve on multiple American Society of Transplant Surgeons committees.

The Center is nearing a “go live” date for a new Oracle program database that will be used for clinical care, insurance contracting, UNOS data reporting and research. It will also interface in a HIPPA compliant fashion with the transplant tissue biorepository that has been in place for the last year. The tissue biorepository has an increasing number of basic science research collaborations in progress. A Grateful Patient Endowment fund has been started, and a recent Grateful Patient Reception organized by the SOM Development office was highly successful.

Education continues to be one of our high priorities. Multi-disciplinary teaching with medical students, general surgery residents, GI fellows, renal fellows, pharmacists, and nursing students occurs daily. We remain committed to building closer collaborations with progressively more programs in our medical center in all of our mission areas.

Dr. Glenn A. Halff, Director, Transplant Center

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