

Survey Finds Elements of High Career Satisfaction Among Local Primary Care Physicians

Initiatives under way to address top needs cited in survey

Primary care physicians associated with UMass Memorial Health Care differ significantly from their peers nationally when it comes to career satisfaction and

“These high satisfaction rates represent very good news about primary care careers.”

Daniel Lasser, MD
Senior Vice President
Office for Primary Care

relationships with their patients, colleagues, communities and staff. Satisfaction with patient and colleague relationships specifically was 11 percent higher than a

nationally representative sample of primary care physicians.

This was among the findings in a recent survey of physicians employed by UMass Memorial or affiliated with the Medical Center and member hospitals — Clinton Hospital, HealthAlliance Hospital, Marlborough Hospital and Wing Memorial Hospital. Surveys were sent to 500 primary care physicians in Central Massachusetts and 43 percent responded.

“These high satisfaction rates with patient and colleague relationships represent some very good news about primary care careers at UMass Memorial and in the surrounding communities,” said Daniel Lasser, MD, senior

vice president, Office for Primary Care. “We certainly want to spread that word to our students and residents. We are also very committed to addressing the concerns raised by the primary care physicians through the survey.”

Under the direction of a research team led by Lee Hargraves, PhD, Heather-Lyn Haley, PhD, and Linda Weinreb, MD, the Office for Primary Care conducted five focus groups and then distributed a survey including topics of local concern as well as those in the well-validated national Physician Worklife Survey. Physicians answered questions about five areas: practice administration, referral services, human

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Marketing Message Extols Value of Primary Care

Quality Care Begins with Primary Care

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UMassMemorial

“Quality Care Begins with Primary Care” is the message that UMass Memorial is presenting to the Greater Worcester region with current advertising billboards.

Through January and February, two billboards are up in Worcester, one at the corner of Lake Avenue and Route 9 near the University Campus and the other on Route 12 (West Boylston Street) near the Roycroft Road intersection. Another billboard is up in Shrewsbury on Route 20 near the Lakeside Drive intersection.

“We have 500 primary care physicians in Central Massachusetts employed or affiliated with us, making our primary care network among the largest of its kind,” said Daniel Lasser, MD, senior vice president, Office for Primary Care. “The billboards demonstrate the value of the primary care physician in the UMass Memorial Health Care system. They put us in front of the community and remind all of us that primary care is the foundation of good health care.”

resources, electronic medical records and advocacy.

Nine of 10 primary care physicians reported feeling a “strong personal connection” with their patients, a high level of satisfaction that was also statistically significantly higher than the national level. Sixty-nine percent of respondents also indicated that their colleagues provided a good source of professional stimulation to them.

Physicians were asked to identify areas for improvement where they believed the Office for Primary Care could be helpful. Table 1 shows the top 10 areas identified by respondents.

“A number of initiatives are already under way to address the topics identified as most important, especially with respect to improving the image of primary care,” said Barbara Weinstein, senior director, Office for Primary Care. During this past fiscal year, UMass Memorial Health Care added marketing and recruiting resources specifically devoted to primary care, she said, adding that the health system sponsored local billboards in direct response to the survey (see related article on previous page).

“At UMass Medical School we are working to get the word out about primary care. For example, we supported an annual Primary Care Dinner that brought medical students

and primary care physicians together in December. We think these are important and meaningful commitments which help to publicly recognize the value of primary care,” said Ms. Weinstein.

Compensation is another key area where the Office for Primary Care has made improvements. For employed primary care physicians, various salary enhancements have been made according to each department’s

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contractual requirements. The Internal Reward Program, developed through the Managed Care Network with support from the Office for Primary Care, has recognized primary care contributions from both employed and private physicians in meeting pay-for-performance goals, and, for a second year, will provide \$500,000 in performance incentives.

Regarding patient access to specialists in a timely fashion, the Medical Center has an initiative under way to reduce the number of days for a new patient appointment with a specialist. Early reports indicate the efforts are having a positive impact. The Office for Primary Care plans to periodically survey

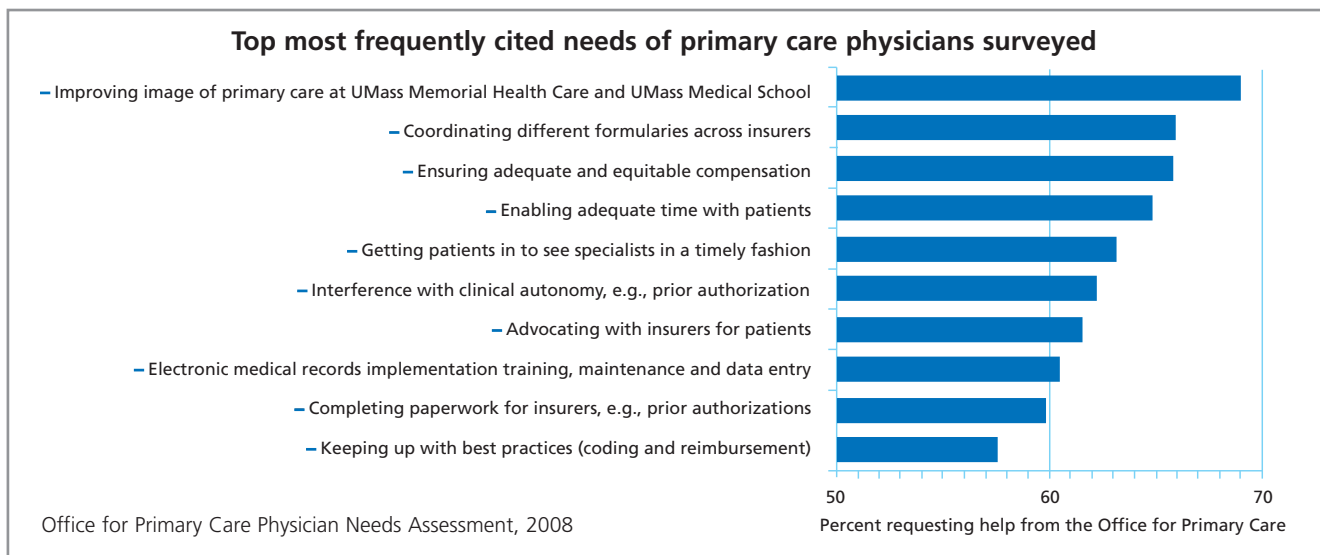
primary care physicians to test the effectiveness of these and other initiatives.

Through their practice improvement efforts, the staff at the Office for Primary Care is exploring practice redesign opportunities around the medical home model, which may help address issues such as having adequate time with patients. Eighty-five percent of the physicians responding to the survey noted this as a problem. Discussions are already taking place about how to share best practice methods in ways that are useful and time-efficient for physicians.

Some areas, such as coordination of different formularies across insurers, may be more challenging to improve, although continued implementation of an electronic medical record will help by providing the formulary status for most pharmacy benefit programs.

“We understand that there is still a lot of work to be done to improve the work life of our physicians and the survey has identified some priority areas for us,” said William Corbett, MD, vice president, UMass Memorial Community Medical Group. “The survey also highlights a wonderful strength of our primary care network — that we have physicians who have strong ties to each other and to the community, and who value deeply the relationships they’ve built with their patients.”

Table 1



Office for Primary Care

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Senior Director

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Quality Care Begins With Primary Care

The Office for Primary Care will create, strengthen and integrate activities across the health care system and the medical school to ensure a robust primary care network that will serve as the main portal of care to patients and will provide excellence in teaching and research.

The Office for Primary Care is supported by UMass Memorial Health Care and UMass Medical School.

Contact Us: 508-334-7050 or officeforprimarycare@umassmemorial.org