

GUEST COLUMN: New Physician Recruiting Data and Insights from Merritt Hawkins

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Every year for the last 29 years, Merritt Hawkins, a division of AMN Healthcare, has released its *Review of Physician and Advanced Practice Practitioner Recruiting Incentives*. Each review is based on real-world physician and Advanced Practice (AP) recruiting data Merritt Hawkins derives over a 12-month period from April 1 of a given year through March 31 of the following year.

The recently released 2022 Review is based on a representative sample of over 2,600 recruiting engagements and, like previous reviews, tracks physician and AP starting salaries, signing bonuses, relocation allowances and related incentives. Over the years the review has provided benchmark data that many hospitals, medical groups and others now use to determine if their recruiting packages offer customary and competitive incentives.

According to the new review, orthopedic surgeons are offered the highest average starting salary among physicians and APs at \$565,000, exclusive of signing bonuses and other incentives, up from \$546,000 the previous year.

Average starting salaries for most other specialties included in the review also were up from last year. Urologists are offered an average of \$510,000 to start, up from \$497,000 last year, gastroenterologists are offered \$474,000, up from \$453,000 last year, while radiologists are offered \$455,000, up from \$401,000 last year.



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The new review indicates that demand for physicians, and the salaries they are offered, have rebounded dramatically from COVID-19. Patient backlogs, an aging population and widespread chronic medical conditions have caused a strong surge in physician demand.

Need for Medical Specialists Rising

The review also indicates that demand for medical specialists such as gastroenterologists, orthopedic surgeons, oncologists, pulmonologists, neurologists and psychiatrists is rising, while demand for primary care physicians such as family physicians and internists has declined. The majority of Merritt Hawkins' search engagements (64%) over the prior 12 months were for medical specialists, while only 17% were for primary care physicians. The remaining 19% were for advanced practice professionals such as nurse practitioners (NPs), physician assistants (PAs) and certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs).

Two factors account for this shift: One is an aging population that needs more specialists to care for ailing internal organs, musculoskeletal conditions, and neurological problems. The other is the growing use of NPs and PAs to provide primary care, often in "convenient care" settings, such as urgent care centers, retail clinics, and through telemedicine.

The review includes a wide range of additional data and analysis. Wisconsin Hospital Association members can obtain a copy of the review by contacting Merritt Hawkins' [Nathan Piller](#).