

Meeting the Need for Primary Care

Background Information Prepared for the Health Care Transformation Task Force By Minnesota Department of Health Staff

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Many of the strategies that the Task Force is considering to improve health care quality and reduce cost rely on primary care. For example, primary care physicians would play a central role in efforts to improve care coordination, and will also be essential partners in working to achieve the Task Force's health promotion goals.

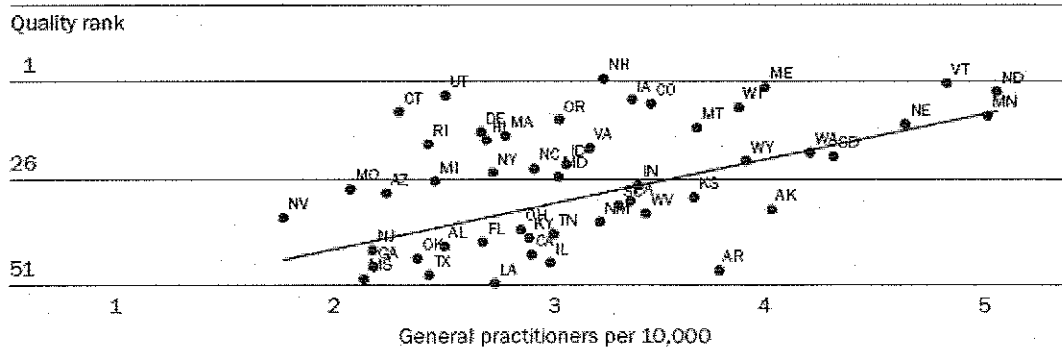
Research has shown that states with a higher share of primary care physicians also have both higher quality and lower total health care spending.¹ Conversely, states with a higher share of specialist physicians have lower quality rankings and higher spending. The exhibits below demonstrate this relationship using a research study that was done using Medicare claims data.

As shown in these exhibits, Minnesota has a relatively high share of primary care physicians and performs well on measures of quality and cost compared to other states. However, a decline in recent years in the percentage of medical school graduates who choose careers in primary care, combined with aging of the physician workforce, has led to concern about whether the primary care physician workforce in Minnesota will be adequate in the future.

Please refer to the separate materials prepared by MDH's Office of Rural Health and Primary Care for information on strategies to expand the scope of activities performed by other health professionals as one way of ensuring that future needs for primary care can be met.

EXHIBIT 8

Relationship Between Provider Workforce And Quality: General Practitioners Per 10,000 And Quality Rank In 2000



SOURCES: Medicare claims data; and Area Resource File, 2003.

NOTES: For quality ranking, smaller values equal higher quality. Total physicians held constant.

¹ Katherine Baicker and Amitabh Chandra, "Medicare Spending, The Physician Workforce, and Beneficiaries' Quality of Care," *Health Affairs* web exclusive, April 7, 2004.

