

# Office of Rural Health & Primary Care Health Workforce Analysis Program

## Greater Minnesota Health Professional Demand Survey 2006

### Highlights

At the beginning of 2006, hospitals and clinics in Greater Minnesota reported strong demand for physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

- Demand for physicians was strongest for primary care and surgical specialties.
- Primary care positions accounted for half of all physician positions under recruitment (when the largest employer in Greater Minnesota is excluded).
- Demand for primary care physicians appeared to be stronger than in 2005.
- Demand for nurse practitioners and physician assistants was robust, but demand rates are subject to error because of small numbers of responding employers.

### Background

The annual Minnesota Health Professional Demand Survey gathers information that can be used to assess the demand for physicians, physician assistants, advanced practice nurses and mental health providers in Minnesota.

The 2006 survey asked about numbers of:

- Practitioners currently employed
- Vacant positions
- Practitioners being recruited.

The 2006 survey also asked about recruiting during 2005, including reasons for vacancies and how long it took to fill vacancies.

Vacancy rates were derived by dividing the number of professionals being recruited by the sum of currently employed practitioners and the number of professionals being recruited.

The questionnaire was mailed in early 2006 to administrators of hospitals, clinics and community mental health centers in the 80 counties outside the seven-county Twin Cities area. Responses were received from 79 employers, for a response rate of 49 percent, compared to a 63 percent response rate in 2005. Because significantly fewer employers with fewer employees responded to the 2006 survey, comparisons of data from the two surveys involve a degree of uncertainty. See the appendix for more information about methodology.



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# Greater Minnesota Health Professional Demand Survey 2006

Previous surveys included Twin Cities area employers, but response rates were too low to provide reliable data. Earlier surveys also included questions about mental health professionals, but these were dropped from the 2006 survey because the sample missed too many employers of mental health providers. The 2005 Demand Assessment data is available at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/workforce/workforce.pdf>.

## Physicians

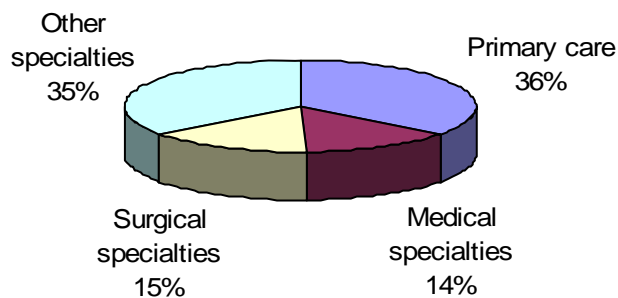
The 79 respondents reported employing 2,464 physicians at the end of 2005. They said they had 235 vacancies, but were recruiting 249 physicians at the time.

Primary care accounted for 23 percent of the reported vacancies and 35 percent of the positions being recruited.

### Physician vacancies and recruiting (all respondents)

	Vacancies	Percent of total	Recruiting	Percent of total
Primary care	54	23%	88	35%
Medical specialties	29	12%	36	14%
Surgical specialties	22	9%	37	15%
Other specialties	51	22%	41	16%
Other	79	34%	47	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Physician Recruitment, 2006



However, one larger employer accounted for more than 70 percent of the employed physicians and vacancies. If this one large employer is excluded, the vacancy and recruitment pattern changes markedly. For the other 78 respondents, primary care accounted for more than half of physician vacancies and positions being recruited.

# Greater Minnesota Health Professional Demand Survey 2006

## Physician vacancies and recruiting (excluding largest respondent)

	Vacancies	Percent of total	Recruiting	Percent of total
Primary care	34	52%	68	50%
Medical specialties	6	9%	13	10%
Surgical specialties	8	12%	24	18%
Other specialties	18	27%	30	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100%</b>

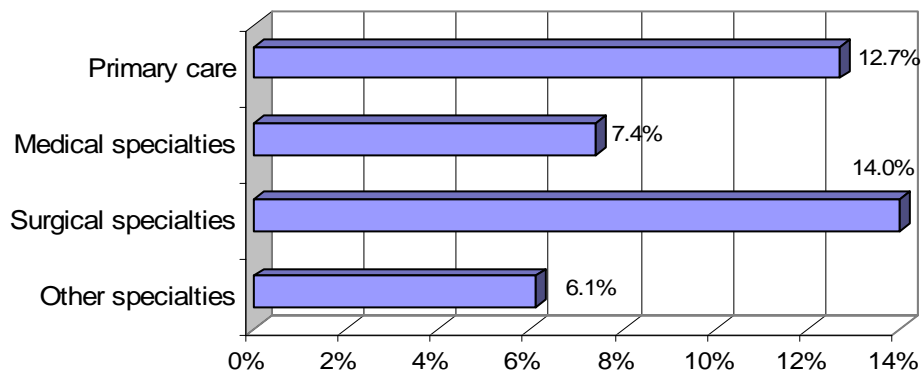
Overall, the 249 physician positions being recruited represented 9 percent of all physician positions. Demand was strongest for surgical specialties and primary care, and lowest for non-surgical specialties. Reported vacancy rates for primary care and surgical specialties were higher than a year earlier, but data for the two years cannot be compared with certainty.

## Estimated physician vacancy rates

	12/31/05	Positions*	12/31/04	Positions*
Primary care	12.7%	695	7.8%	1,354
Medical specialties	7.4%	485	8.4%	454
Surgical specialties	14.0%	265	9.3%	533
Other specialties	6.1%	672	11.6%	1,016

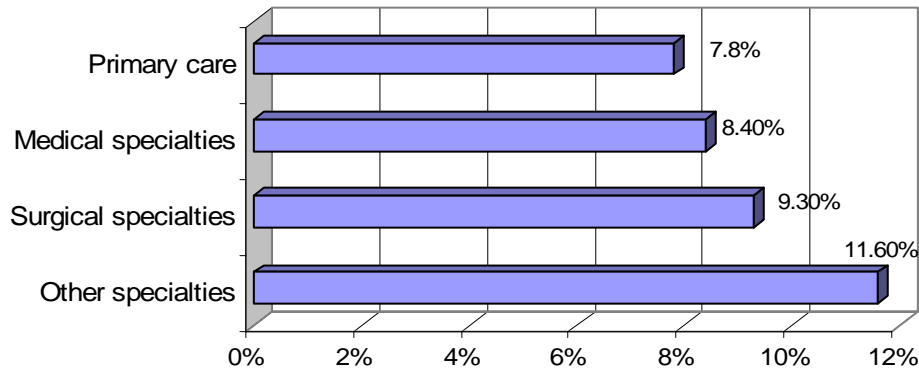
Positions = employed plus physicians being recruited.

## Estimated physician vacancy rates, 2006



# Greater Minnesota Health Professional Demand Survey 2006

**Estimated physician vacancy rates, 2005**



**Physician vacancy rates by specialty.** Vacancy rates are reported below for individual specialties for which respondents reported information on at least 50 positions (number currently practicing plus reported vacancies). For specialties with data for fewer than 50 positions, a small change in the number of vacancies would significantly change the vacancy rate. Reported vacancy rates for specialties with fewer than 100 positions should be treated with care.

	<b>Greater Minnesota</b>	
	<b>Vacancy Rate</b>	<b>Positions</b>
<b>Family Medicine</b>	11.5%	408
<b>Internal Medicine</b>	18.1%	105
<b>OB/GYN</b>	11.1%	72
<b>Pediatrics</b>	13.2%	106
<b>Cardiology</b>	4.8%	146
<b>Hematology</b>	12.0%	50
<b>Gastroenterology</b>	1.1%	87
<b>Neurology</b>	8.1%	99
<b>Psychiatry</b>	11.1%	126
<b>General Surgery</b>	14.8%	54
<b>Orthopedic surgery</b>	17.1%	82
<b>Emergency Medicine (FP/IM &amp; BC)</b>	11.7%	60
<b>Pathology</b>	*	53
<b>Oncology</b>	14.6%	82
<b>Anesthesiology</b>	1.7%	119
<b>Diagnostic radiology</b>	4.8%	168

\* Respondents reported five vacancies, but did not report recruiting for any positions.  
Minimum 50 positions

# Greater Minnesota Health Professional Demand Survey 2006

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## **Physician Assistants and Advance Practice Nurses**

The Demand Assessment survey also asked employers about vacancies and recruitment of physician assistants and advance practice nurses.

The number of respondents reporting employment of these midlevel practitioners was too small to permit reliable comparisons with 2005 vacancy rates.

### **Nurse practitioners**

Twenty-one respondents reported 16 vacancies. They said they were actively recruiting for 23 positions, producing an 18 percent vacancy rate. More than half of nurse practitioner vacancies were for family practice. The computed 2006 vacancy rate is more than twice as high as 2005, but the 2006 rate is subject to error because of the small number of respondents.

### **Physician assistants**

Seventeen respondents reported employing 141 physician assistants, but only four said they had vacancies for physician assistants. They were recruiting for 11 open positions, producing a vacancy rate of about seven percent.

### **Certified registered nurse anesthetists**

Nine respondents reported employing 150 certified registered nurse anesthetists, but only one respondent reported a vacancy or recruitment activity.

### **Certified nurse midwives**

Survey respondents reported employing only eight certified nurse midwives. Only one employer reported recruitment activity.

# Greater Minnesota Health Professional Demand Survey 2006

## METHODOLOGY

The Minnesota Center for Rural Health at the Rural Health Resource Center administered the survey for the Minnesota Department of Health's Office of Rural and Primary Care.

The 2006 survey was mailed to 196 employers of health care professionals in the 80 counties outside the seven-county Twin Cities area. Thirty-five potential respondents were eliminated because the employer was no longer in business, did not employ any physicians, physician assistants or nurse practitioners, or because it was part of a larger health care organization that managed employment and recruitment. Responses were received from 79 of the remaining 161 employers, for an overall response rate of 49 percent. It is not known what percentage of total statewide employment the 79 respondents comprise.

Clinics and hospital-affiliated clinics accounted for 63 percent of respondents. Organizations operating hospitals and associated clinics accounted for 76 percent of reported physician positions. Clinic-only organizations accounted for another 11 percent.

Hospitals and associated clinics accounted for 67 percent of reported physician assistant and nurse practitioner employment. Clinic-only organizations accounted for 19 percent.

Type of organization	Respondents	Employees 12/31/05	
		Physicians	PAs and NPs
Hospitals	8	8	11
Hospitals and clinics	28	1,845	169
Clinics	22	271	47
Health systems	1	189	0
Mental health centers	13	26	15
Other or not defined	7	92	8

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