

# THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY

## THE DEMAND FOR GERIATRIC CARE AND THE EVIDENT SHORTAGE OF GERIATRICS HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

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### FACTORS ARE DRIVING THE FUTURE DEMAND FOR GERIATRIC CARE<sup>i</sup>

- Americans are living longer and therefore are accumulating more diseases and disabilities.
- One in five Americans will be eligible for Medicare by 2030.
- Those 65 and older are expected to account for almost 20% of the U.S. population by 2030.
- Older adults account for a disproportionate share of healthcare services:
  - 26% of all physician office visits;
  - 35% of all hospital stays;
  - 34% of all prescriptions;
  - 38% of all emergency medical responses; and
  - 90% of all nursing home use.
- About 80% of older adults require care for chronic conditions such as hypertension, arthritis, and heart disease.

### THE SHORTAGE OF HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CERTIFIED OR SPECIALIZING IN GERIATRICS

- There are currently over 7,500 allopathic and osteopathic certified geriatricians in the US.<sup>ii</sup> It's projected that approximately 30% of the 65 plus patient population will need to be cared for by a geriatrician and that each geriatrician can care for a patient panel of 700 older adults.<sup>iii</sup> Based on these numbers, approximately 17,000 geriatricians are needed now to care for about 12 million older Americans.
- Due to the projected increase in the number of older Americans, it is estimated that approximately 30,000 geriatricians will be needed by 2030. To meet this need, this would require training approximately 1,200 geriatricians per year over the next 20 years.
- There are far fewer geriatric psychiatrists -currently there are less than 1,600.<sup>ii</sup>
- Furthermore, less than 1% of RNs, Pharmacists, and Physician Assistants; and about 2.6% of APRNs are certified in geriatrics.<sup>i</sup>
- Additionally, approximately 3% of psychologists devote the majority of practice to older adults; and about 4% of social workers specialize in geriatrics.<sup>i</sup>

### FEW MEDICAL STUDENTS ARE CHOOSING GERIATRICS, PUTTING THE FUTURE SUPPLY OF GERIATRICIANS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN JEOPARDY

- Few graduates of medical schools in the U.S. are pursuing advanced training in geriatrics. In 2010, a mere 75 residents in internal medicine or family medicine entered geriatric medicine fellowship programs. This is down from 112 in 2005.<sup>iv</sup>
- A career focused on caring for older adults can be particularly financially unattractive for physicians who carry large medical school debt.
- Physicians in internal medicine, family medicine – and geriatrics – earn significantly less and have less predictable work schedules than those in other medical and surgical specialties.
- With the supply of geriatricians in jeopardy; older adults will not receive the care they need.

<sup>i</sup> IOM report *Retooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce*.

<sup>ii</sup> 2012 ABMS Certificate Statistics and *J Am Osteopath Assoc*. 2012;112(4):226-231.

<sup>iii</sup> Fried, L. P. & Hall, W. J. (2008). Leading on Behalf of an Aging Society. *The Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 56, 1791-1795.

<sup>iv</sup> American Geriatrics Society Geriatrics Workforce Policy Studies Center.