

Residency match results encouraging for adults needing primary care

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The increase in the number of U.S. medical students choosing internal medicine residencies in 2011 is a positive sign toward easing the primary care workforce shortage, according to the American College of Physicians (ACP), the nation's second-largest doctors group.

The 2011 National Resident Matching Program report released today shows an 8.0 percent increase from last year, with 2,940 U.S. seniors at medical schools enrolling in an internal medicine residency program, compared to 2,722 in 2010. This is the second consecutive year that internal medicine enrollment numbers have increased. This trend follows a two year decline from 2007 to 2009 (2,680 in 2007; 2,660 in 2008; and 2,632 in 2009).

"This is good news for internal medicine and adult patient care in the U.S.," said J. Fred Ralston, Jr. MD, FACP, president, ACP. "The American College of Physicians has consistently called for health care reforms that support internal medicine as a career path, including increasing support for primary care training programs, increasing Medicaid and [Medicare reimbursement](#) to [primary care physicians](#), and expanding pilot testing and implementation of new models of patient care."

While ACP welcomed the trend of more U.S. students choosing internal medicine residencies, the organization cautioned that increasing the nation's primary care workforce has a long way to go to meet the needs of an [aging population](#) requiring care for chronic and complex illnesses.

"We're cautiously optimistic and hope that the positive trend continues," said Steven Weinberger, MD, FACP, executive vice president and CEO, ACP. "But the U.S. still has to overcome a generational shift that resulted in decreased numbers of students choosing primary care as a career. In 1985, 3,884 U.S. medical school graduates chose internal medicine residency programs. And the 18.9 percent of U.S. seniors that matched internal medicine in 2011 is the same percentage as 2007."

The 2011 match numbers include students who will ultimately enter a subspecialty of internal medicine, such as cardiology or gastroenterology. Currently, about 20 to 25 percent of internal medicine residents eventually choose to specialize in general internal medicine, compared with 54 percent in 1998.

Provided by American College of Physicians

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