

President's Page

A New Beginning

June 1, 2018, was a special day for 238 graduating medical students from UT Southwestern Medical Center.

It also was an exciting evening for me, as the president representing your Dallas County Medical Society at this event.

DCMS has had a strong relationship with UTSW for many years. Every school year starts with a fun dinner for all new medical students in August and culminates in the medical student graduation in June. Having the honor of reciting the physician's oath as part of the commencement exercises that evening took me back 40 years to my graduating event.

On this June evening, a wonderful group of young women and men started an exciting future with new surroundings where they will initiate the next phase of their long journey: medical residencies. In addition, the care delivery models they will be exposed to will continue to evolve, and this new generation of physicians will be exposed to more up-to-the-minute data at their fingertips, augmented intelligence applied to health care, and the new world of telehealth and telemedicine. Even though medical school enrollment has significantly increased in the last 15 years, the total physician shortfall is calculated to be between 42,000 and 121,300 physicians by 2030, according to the 2018 update by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). Part of this shortage is directly related to the population growth, an aging population and retiring physicians. As I've discussed previously, physician burnout also is a contributing factor.

The percentage of people older than 65 will grow by 50 percent during the same time. In addition, more than one third of active physicians will be older than 65 within the next 10 years. So, the need for well-trained physicians will continue unabated.

The physician shortfall has impacted Texas more than other states. The current data ranks Texas at 47th out of 50 states with adequate number of physicians available. In particular, Texas was below the national average in the ratio of primary care physicians to the population.

Concern is increasing about the growing number of medical schools in the nation and in Texas, in particular. Results from the 2017 Medical School Enrollment Survey conducted by AAMC and reported in May 2018 showed a 29 percent growth in US medical school enrollment since 2002–2003. But apprehension remains about the availability of residency positions for all these new physicians. According to this survey, the United States had 125 accredited medical schools in 2002. This number had increased to 151 MD schools and 34 DO schools by March 2018, and the number of residency slots also increased.

But there needs to be a healthy balance between undergraduate medical education (UME) and graduate medical education (GME). It is well-known that when medical students are trained and do their residency in the same state, they likely remain in that state. This has been true in Texas. The most recent national data showed that Texas retained 59.9 percent of medical school graduates



Ruben L. Velez, MD

who did residencies outside the state, but when they completed both medical school and residency in Texas, 80.9 percent stayed here, giving us the fourth-highest retention rate. In spite of this, Texas still ranked below the national average in primary care trainees but did have an 18.6 percent growth in primary care residency slots from 2006–2016.

With the addition of new medical schools in Texas in the last four years, the state is trying to keep up with the need for well-trained physicians. The Legislature and the TMA have supported the creation of these new schools, but remain concerned about the availability of GME slots to train all these physicians. The calculated GME/UME ratio for Texas for 2015–2016 was 1.0, and the plan is to take this to a ratio of 1.1. Although the state invests heavily in medical students' education and in GME availability, other healthcare partners need to be involved.

Recent communication from Medical City Healthcare—Hospital Corporation of America regarded its commitment to one of the new medical schools, the University of North Texas Health Science Center—Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, to open in 2019. HCA has committed to develop 500 resident positions in North Texas over the next seven years to support the training of future healthcare providers.

Advice to graduates

What about advice for the new physicians ready to start their training and new physicians who are starting their practices? Their formal education no longer is an issue, as they will have many tools at their disposal to help them be the best they can be.

I'd tell them that the simple things are the ones that count: Remain honest and truthful to your physician oath. In particular, respect all your patients and respect life. Remain humble. Continue to refine the art of listening; this will help you not only in medicine, but in life. Learn every day of your life, as this will serve your patients well. Continue to pursue perfection. Healing then becomes an art—not only physical healing, but also spiritual healing.

This is an exciting part of your lives and practicing medicine can be fun. Your patients can become your friends. They will make you a better doctor and a better person. Most important,



remember that in taking the Hippocratic oath, you promised to “above all, do no harm.” **DMJ**

Sources

The Complexities of Physician Supply and Demand: Projections from 2016–2030. Association of American Medical Colleges; March 2018.

Results of the 2017 Medical School Enrollment Survey. Association of American Medical Colleges; May 2018.

2017 State Physician Workforce Data Report. Association of American Medical Colleges; November 2017.

“Does Texas Need More Medical Schools?” Texas Medicine, January 2018.

Advice?

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