Doctor Shortages

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Throughout the world, with the aging population growing, doctor shortages are becoming more and more common. The patient to doctor ratio is increasing, in some countries more than others, but nonetheless it’s causing a problem. It can cause longer wait time, sloppy service, and could possibly increase costs of medical care.
Past Solutions

- One idea for this shortage was to increase federal funding for residency training. The thought behind this was that medical schools are doing their part in getting more students enrolled, but Congress needs to fund residency trainings to allow more doctors to actually become doctors and to know what they’re doing in the field.

- Another idea is to retrain and redistribute doctors into different specialties and locations to relieve the shortages. There are plenty of psychiatrists and cardiologists, but no where near enough physicians. The thought here is that we can retrain these excess doctors into specialties that are in a shortage and then redistribute them to lacking locations.
Statistics

- Cuba currently has the best patient to doctor ratio with 170:1, while the US is 370:1. Those may sound very high, until you see that in countries like Guatemala, India, and Thailand have reached thousands of patients to one doctor. And that’s not even the worst of it. Tanzania and Malawi have the worst patient to doctor ratio at 50,000:1.

- According to a study made by AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges), the US is expected to experience a shortage between 61,700 and 94,700 doctors, both primary and specialty care, by the year 2025.
Many people believe that the developments in technology will allow doctors to go further into medicine without needing many doctors. Technologies that remind patients to take their medicines and provide guidance about their conditions have kept patients out of the offices, but we still need doctors to diagnose and help them.

A more controversial idea is allowing nurse practitioners, physician's assistants, pharmacists, and dental aides to do more work usually reserved for main doctors. This will allow offices to operate with the shortage of doctors as long as there are enough aides and nurses to take over the extra work.
Solutions

To help alleviate the shortage, the AAMC supports a multi pronged solution, which includes innovations in care delivery, better use of technology, and increased federal support for an additional 3,000 new residency positions a year over the next five years. Medical schools have done their part to increase the overall number of physicians by expanding their class sizes, and now Congress must approve a modest increase in federal support for new doctor training if the United States is to increase its overall number of physicians, according to Kirch. After graduating from medical school, all new MDs must complete a residency to be able to care for patients independently.
Personal Opinion

- I think the medical system should allow physician’s assistants and nurse practitioners to do more work to make up for the lost doctors and to keep the patients happy. Also I think the government should find a way to make medical school less expensive so more people have the option to become doctors.
- As well as making medical school cost less, an increase in promoting the varying roles in health care that exist could largely benefit the situation. Many don’t know what it takes to be a doctor, or what physician assistants and nurse practitioners even do. I believe that if more people know about careers in the medical field, the amount of interest may increase.
Questions

1. What is the current doctor to patient ratio in the US?
   a- 50:1   b- 100:1   c- 370:1   d-554:1

2. Which country has the lowest doctor to patient ratio?
   a- Cuba   b- Japan   c- US   d- England

3. True or false: The doctor shortage can cause longer wait times.
4. What were some solutions for this problem?
5. What year will the US have a shortage of doctors between 61,700 and 94,700?
   a- 2018   b- 2075   c- 2025   d- 2043
Work Cited

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