

Title: The Role and Value of Geriatricians in Healthcare Teams: A Landscape Analysis

Author(s): Aubri Kottek MPH, Timothy Bates, MPH, Joanne Spetz, PhD

Issue: In this 2-stage project we examine current and emerging roles of geriatricians as members of healthcare teams across different care settings.

Methods: In stage 1, we conducted a comprehensive review of both the peer-reviewed and grey literature. We focused the review on medical geriatricians, excluding psychiatric geriatricians, except to the extent that the literature combines these physicians.

Findings: While it is difficult to know the true number of practicing geriatricians, the supply has been negatively affected by tightening certification requirements, relatively low income and negative return on the training investment. Consensus is developing that clinical care by geriatricians should be reserved for the most complex patients, and, therefore, that the future workforce focus should be on ensuring that every clinician caring for older adults is competent in geriatric principles and practices, rather than on increasing numbers of board-certified geriatricians.

Discussion: Experts in geriatric medicine are pushing the field to focus more on leadership, education, and designing new older adult care systems. In this framework, consultant and leadership roles will continue to be important. In addition, it appears that clinical care settings of geriatricians are moving away from outpatient facilities toward SNFs and other care facilities, with the expectation of more home care and visits but less hospital care in the future.

There is general agreement on the need to shift the focus from shortages and unpopularity of the specialty toward a culture in which geriatric principles and practices are taught in mainstream education. This will ensure a primary care workforce that is competent in geriatric medicine and will allow the limited supply of specialized geriatricians (whether CAQ diplomates or not) to focus on higher level needs.

Key Words: Geriatrician workforce, geriatric care, older, interdisciplinary, care teams

HWRC Website Link:

https://healthworkforce.ucsf.edu/sites/healthworkforce.ucsf.edu/files/REPORT_Geriatricians_FINAL.pdf