

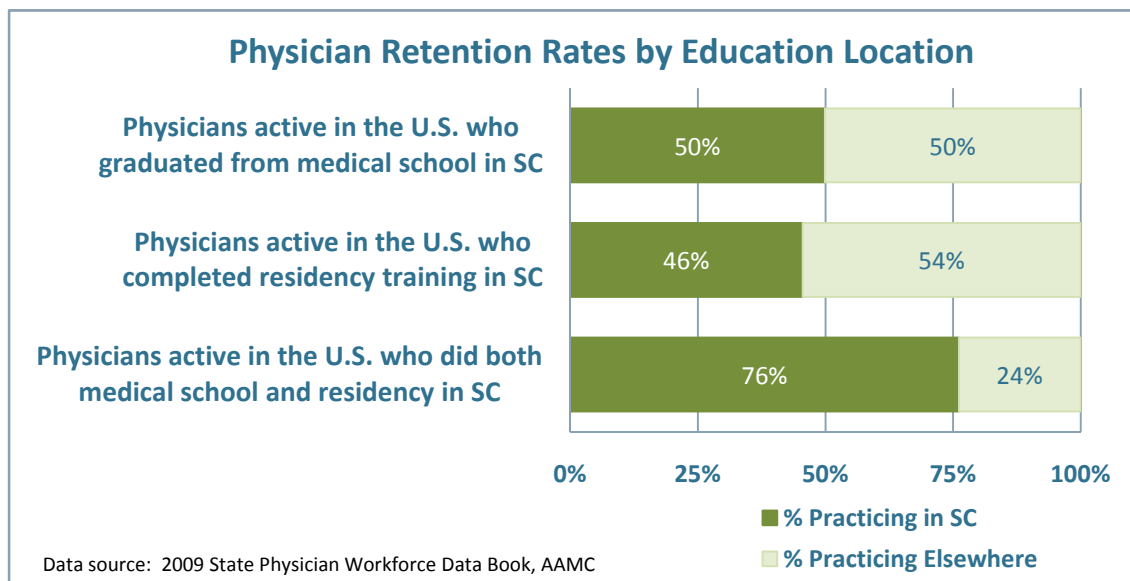


DATA BRIEF • March 2011

Retaining Physicians Educated in South Carolina

Medical education is expensive for both the students and the states that support physician education in public universities and clinical training sites. Understanding the factors that influence where physicians decide to practice can help states maximize the return on their investment in this important public health resource. Physicians educated in the United States have the luxury of being able to practice anywhere in the country they choose, yet policies affecting student admissions and residency training opportunities can be influential.

Information published by the Association of American Medical Colleges, based on data maintained by the American Medical Association, suggests that where physicians attend medical school and complete their residency training are both influential factors in where physicians ultimately decide to practice. Other research has found that having ties to a community prior to entering medical school is also a good predictor of physician practice location.



In the 2008-09 academic year, a total of 245 South Carolinians entered medical school somewhere in the United States; 87% of them enrolled in a South Carolina program, earning the state the highest in-state matriculation rate in the country that year. The average rate across all states was 62% in 2008.

South Carolina also has done better than many states in retaining physicians who complete their medical education and/or their residency training in the state. The table and chart included here report the numbers and percentages respectively. The average retention rate across the United States for keeping physicians who attended medical school in state is 39%, based on the 2008 active physician workforce. In South Carolina, the retention rate for medical school graduates was 50% based on that same 2008 physician workforce.

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The average retention rate based on where physicians completed their residency training was 47% across all states. South Carolina was similar to the average on this measure, with a retention rate of 46%, and a ranking of 24th out of 50 when compared to all other states.

Physician Education and Practice Location		
Of all of the physicians in active practice in the United States in 2008:	Total #	# Practicing in South Carolina
# who attended medical school in SC	6,205	3,096
# who did their residency training in SC	6,959	3,169
# who did both medical school and residency training in SC	2,322	1,768

When both medical school location and residency training location are considered, retention rates rise. The average, across all states, was 66%, based on the 2008 active physician workforce. South Carolina ranked 10th in the nation, with a retention rate of 76% when both factors are present.

Not surprisingly, the number of physicians able to complete both their medical education and their residency training within South Carolina is relatively small, compared to the number that have completed either medical school or residency training here. (See the table above for the numbers.)

Note: The original data source (cited below) uses the term Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) to refer to the medical school portion of physician education and the term Graduate Medical Education (GME) to refer to the residency training portion. We have used the terms "medical school" and "residency training" which are a bit easier to understand for a general audience not familiar with the different levels of physician education.

Data Source: 2009 State Physician Workforce Data Book, Center for Workforce Studies, Association of American Medical Colleges, Published November, 2009. Physician counts are from the American Medical Association Masterfile as of December 31, 2008: Table 17 Physicians Retained from Undergraduate Medical Education (UME), Table 19 Physicians Retained from GME, Table 20 Physicians Retained from Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) and (GME) Combined, and Table 11 In-state Matriculation to Medical School for the 2008-2009 Academic Year.