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Medical Residents Optimistic about Jobs, Compensation and Future as Physicians, 2015 Medscape Resident Salary & Debt Report Shows

Residents also express high comfort level with telemedicine, contrasting with slow adoption rates among practicing physicians

NEW YORK, July 22, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Despite large debts and long hours, most medical residents are satisfied with their compensation, professional relationships, and career choices, according to [Medscape's 2015 Residents Salary & Debt Report](#) released today. With responses from 1,745 residents across 24+ specialties, the two-part report examines financial and professional topics, as well as lifestyle and practice-related issues, that impact job satisfaction, career outlook and employment considerations.

In the first portion of the report, available now on Medscape.com <http://www.medscape.com/features/slideshow/public/residents-salary-and-debt-report-2015>, the majority of respondents report their compensation to be fair, but that debt and earning potential influence their choice of specialty and continued satisfaction. Results from the latter portion of the study (to be released in full on July 29) show that a majority of residents are willing to conduct patient consultations via telehealth technologies as part of their future practice – an interesting contrast to many practicing physicians, who have been slow to embrace the approach.

2015 Medscape Resident Salary & Debt Report Shows Medical Residents Optimistic about Jobs, Compensation and Future as Physicians.

"The next generation of caregivers will be entering the medical field in perhaps its period of greatest change, and the Medscape Residents Salary and Debt Report provides an enlightening look at attitudes, motivations and hopes of these professionals," said Leslie Kane, Director, Business of Medicine, Medscape. "This year's study uncovered a largely optimistic view among residents who consider their jobs rewarding, compensation fair, relationships with senior staff members good, and the amount of hours and tedious work manageable – but also underscored the impact of debt on career choices."

"Not surprisingly, a generation of residents raised in the Internet age also report being comfortable applying digital technology to the highly personal business of healthcare," Kane added.

The report features insights around compensation, debt burden, work-life balance, comfort with new technologies, and self-confidence. Highlights include:

Fairly Compensated – For Now

- **Steady pay:** In 2015, the average resident reported a salary of \$55,400 – little changed from the previous year (\$55,300).
- **Gender gap closing:** Male and female residents averaged nearly the same salary (\$56,000 to \$55,000 respectively); a slight improvement since 2014 (\$56,000 vs. \$54,000, respectively).
- **Experience and specialty determine pay:** Eighth-year residents made approximately 20 percent more (\$63,000) than those newly graduated (\$52,000). The highest paid residents are in critical care (\$62,000), oncology (\$61,000) and pulmonary medicine (\$61,000), while the lowest paid are in internal and general/family medicine (each \$53,000).
- **... but not after residency is complete:** The three top-paying resident specialties – critical care, oncology and pulmonary medicine – were in the middle of the pack of salaries for established physicians in our [2015 Physician Compensation Report](#).

A Heavy Debt Burden: Influencing Specialty Choices?

- **High debt:** More than one-third (37 percent) of residents carry upwards of \$200,000 in debt, while approximately two-thirds (68 percent) have at least \$50,000 in unpaid loans. In contrast, the average graduate student carries \$57,600 in debt¹.
- **Salaries matter:** Nearly three quarters (74 percent) of 2015 respondents stated that potential earnings were somewhat-to-extremely influential in their specialty selection, and more than half (56 percent) of primary-care residents planned to

switch specialties.

Hospital Life and Personal Wellness

- **Patients come first:** The majority of reported hospital time is devoted to patient care, with 79 percent of residents seeing patients at least 40 hours per week and 38 percent treating patients 60 hours per week.
- **Seniority helps:** The percentage of residents working more than 60 hours per week is indeed high in the first year (67 percent), but declines gradually through the fifth year (36 percent).
- **Tempting burnout fate?** Just 13 percent report that they always spend enough time and attention on personal wellness in order to prevent burnout.
- **Whistling while they work:** The majority of residents (58 percent) felt that they had a reasonable balance of important responsibilities and standard chores. Only 20 percent said they had too much scut work, and 22 percent reported no menial work at all.
- **Confident and fulfilled:** The overwhelming majority of respondents (84 percent) affirm that they look forward to becoming a doctor, and cite "clinical knowledge and experience" (75 percent), "Being very good at putting what I've learned into practice" (69 percent), and "Gratitude/relationships with patients" (63 percent) as key satisfaction measures. In contrast, "Making good money" ranked near the bottom, with only 32 percent citing it as a source of job satisfaction.

Comfort with Virtual Care

- **Open to telehealth:** Nearly three-quarters of residents (70 percent) would be willing to conduct telehealth sessions via online videoconferencing, though this willingness seems dependent on incorporating face-to-face time with the patient. The figure dropped for non-visual technologies, such as phone and e-mail (63 percent and 56 percent, respectively), but was still acceptable to the majority.

Medscape Survey Methods:

The Medscape Resident Salary and Debt Survey 2015 was completed by 1,745 physicians, representing more than 24+ specialties, from May 14, 2015, to June 22, 2015. Respondents were invited to respond to the online survey and were required to be a medical resident enrolled in a U.S. program. The margin of error for the survey was +/- 2.31% at a 95% confidence level.

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ⁱ Bidwell A. How much loan debt is from grad students? More than you think. US News & World Report. March 25, 2015. <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/03/25/how-much-outstanding-loan-debt-is-from-grad-students-more-than-you-think> Accessed July 8, 2015.

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