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Medscape 2016 Resident Salary & Debt Report: Despite Shrinking Gender Gap in Compensation, Medical Residents Confront Debt and Depression

NEW YORK, July 20, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- While recent studies have documented a wide gender gap in compensation for established physicians,^{1,2} the salary gap is virtually non-existent between male and female residents, according to the 2016 Resident Salary & Debt report released today by Medscape, the leading source of medical news and information for physicians. Regardless of gender, fewer residents believe their compensation to be fair as compared to responses in last year's survey.

View Report Here: <http://www.medscape.com/features/slideshow/public/residents-salary-and-debt-report-2016>

Medscape's two-part annual report examined the financial and lifestyle/practice-related issues of more than 1,800 U.S. medical residents across 25 specialties. The first part of the report, released today, includes findings on issues related to compensation, resident debt and on-the-job demands that can influence overall professional satisfaction and future career decisions. Medscape will release the remainder of the report, which will focus on lifestyle-related issues, on August 10.

The 2016 Report shows that male residents earn an average \$56,700 and female residents earn \$56,100 – averages comparable to those in 2015 (\$56,000 for men, \$55,000 for women). And while a majority of male and female residents believe they are fairly compensated (52% and 55%, respectively), these rates are lower than in the 2015 report (60% and 65%, respectively). Commenters cited comparisons with higher paid non-physician health care professionals (nurse practitioners and physician assistants) and those of non-medical professionals with comparable education and experience as reasons for their discontent.

Confronting a significant amount of medical school debt, more than one-half, 56%, say future compensation will influence their choice of specialty (and 36% said it is the leading factor in specialty choice) which may in part be reflective of resident medical school debt. More than two-thirds (68%) owe \$50,000 or more, and 40% report debt of \$200,000 or greater.

"Our report yielded some surprising insights about the next generation of physicians," said Leslie Kane, MA, Senior Director, Medscape Business of Medicine. "While medical school debt remains a concern and depression is a serious issue for too many residents, they remain largely positive about the future, which we believe has a lot to do with what they value most about the profession. For example, when asked to rank the most rewarding aspects of their job, relationships with patients, gaining clinical knowledge, and pride in being a doctor are at the top of the list while potential for making money ranks low."

Positive on Work Treatment, But Depression a Major Issue

[While there have been reports of resident mistreatment and bullying](#) by attending physicians, a strong majority, 88%, said they were satisfied with their relationships with attending physicians. However, nearly one in four (24%) said they have experienced bullying from physicians often or occasionally. The majority, 87%, expressed satisfaction with the degree of supervision by attending physicians, and 76% said they are satisfied with the quality of their learning experiences, in which attending physicians figure prominently. Still, more than half of residents (55%) said that they only occasionally have sufficient time with patients, and nearly one in five residents (19%) said they have doubts about their ability to be a good physician.

Importantly, 10% of residents said they feel depressed always or most of the time and 9% said they have considered suicide. Studies of the general population (adults over age 18) show a 6.7% incidence of depression (National Institutes of Health, 2014) and 3.9% of the general population ages 26-49 have considered suicide (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2013).

How Residents See Their Future

[Although current trends show younger physicians opting for employment over private practice](#), nearly one-quarter of

residents responding to the survey (22%) said they envision a future in private practice, either solo or with partners -- a slight drop from 2015 (26%). Employment is preferred by 29%, up somewhat from last year (24%), and about one-fifth said they might do both. And, similar to responses from 2015, 28% have yet to decide.

And while [data points to a future shortage of primary care physicians](#), 43% of residents said they plan to remain in primary care, with 45% indicating they plan to subspecialize.

Medscape Survey Methods:

The Medscape Resident Salary and Debt Survey 2016 was completed by 1,888 physicians, representing more than 25 specialties, from May 20, 2016, to June 13, 2016. 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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- 1) [Female Academic Physicians Make \\$20,000 Less Than Peers](#), Medscape, July 12, 2016
- 2) [Medscape Physician Compensation Report, 2016](#)

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