AMA mapping tool identifies where workforce needs are greatest

NOV 19, 2020

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A customizable, AMA data-visualization tool that has been used to locate physician shortage areas and allocate resources has been redesigned for easier navigation and more accessible tools such as user tutorials that facilitate research or guide public health decisions.

The AMA Health Workforce Mapper has been used by physicians and medical residents to help them decide where they are needed most. The free, interactive tool can also be used by researchers, journalists, legislators, policymakers and others to better understand trends and identify gaps in patient access to care.

The updated tool provides information on an area’s physician and nonphysician health care workforce, with granular listing of specialists and subspecialists by state, county, ZIP code and census tract. The mapper uses data from the AMA and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Physicians can use this information to help them determine where to locate or expand their practices to reach patients in greatest need of access to care.

Picture of health

The AMA Health Workforce Mapper gives users a snapshot of a region’s health and health care systems. This includes health statistics for individual congressional districts, medically underserved areas and populations—plus data for individual congressional districts and Health Professional Shortage Areas for primary care, dental care and behavioral health.

The tool can be used to distinguish possible areas of both deficiency and overlap, and to identify high-priority areas for workforce expansion. With this tool, users can:

URL: https://www.ama-assn.org/about/research/ama-mapping-tool-identifies-where-workforce-needs-are-greatest

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Demonstrate to law- or policymakers the geographic distribution of the health care workforce to assist them in making appropriate, evidence-based decisions.

Identify areas of potential need for certain medical specialties for purposes of creating effective workforce strategies to expand patient access to care.

View locations of hospitals, rural health clinics, Veterans Health Administration facilities and other health care institutions.

View geographic features, including highways, mountain ranges and waterways, that may have an impact on the distribution of health care professionals and facilities.

The tool’s Population Health Explorer uses data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to display a variety of health factors, including:

- Morbidity and mortality rates per health indicator.
- Rates on hospital readmissions and health insurance coverage.
- Information on patient health behaviors, and social environment such as education and employment levels.
- Health care quality data.

With these features, users can see where physicians practice and the factors that influence patient health and access to care.

**Useful tool for health advocates**

The AMA Health Workforce Mapper has been used in Idaho, for example, to successfully advocate for expanding medical education funding and graduate medical education programs—especially in rural areas.

State and specialty societies also have found the Health Workforce Mapper to be a useful tool in advocating for telemedicine and collaborative care, as well as for giving lawmakers data-driven insights into policy questions surrounding scope of practice.

The Health Workforce Mapper was developed in collaboration with the American Academy of Family Physicians Robert Graham Center and HealthLandscape.

AMA members can view a comprehensive version of the tool that includes the capacity to export a customizable Microsoft Excel file that ranks the health care workforce and demographic data by county.