

## **IS THE ECONOMY DRIVING PHYSICIANS BACK TO PRACTICE? AN UPDATE FROM A CLINICAL PRACTICE RE-ENTRY PROGRAM**

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**Introduction:** Due to the recent economic downturn, many retired or non-practicing physicians are deciding to return to clinical practice. CPEP, the Center for Personalized Education for Physicians, has seen a 300% increase in enrollment in its Clinical Practice Re-entry Program (Re-entry Program) in 2009, a trend that CPEP believes is strongly tied to the current state of the economy and physicians' sense of financial security. As the number of re-entry physicians seeking licensure surges, Medical Boards must have resources to determine current competence and to provide education programs that ensure safe transition into clinical practice.

CPEP believes that an increasing proportion of re-entry physicians will be physicians who left medicine with no intent of return. Importantly, these physicians may have made minimal attempts to stay current in their specialty – raising increased concerns about their clinical competence. In this study, CPEP will provide updated information about re-entry physician characteristics and identify trends that are important to Medical Boards.

**Purpose:** The purposes of this study are: (1) to update previous data regarding the characteristics of physicians who are seeking to return to practice after an absence (re-entry physicians); (2) to identify whether an increasing proportion of re-entry physicians are physicians who had previously retired without the expectation to resume practice; (3) to review the outcomes for participants in a program developed to address educational needs of this physician population; and (4) to again analyze trends that might predict physician performance; (5) to gain insight into whether the economic factors are, in fact, at least partially responsible for physicians deciding to return to practice.

**Methods:** Participants in the CPEP Physician Re-entry Program provided data about their personal and professional characteristics and licensure status at the time of participation using participant-completed forms; data were also obtained from conversations between program staff and these physicians. Outcome data were derived from the completed participant Re-entry Program report. Subsequent and/or current licensure status was derived from publicly available licensure databases as well as individual physicians.

**Results:** Participants were characterized according to practice specialty, length of time out of practice, reason(s) for leaving practice, as well as other factors. The overall performance of these physicians is described based on the analysis of reported results; additionally, the success of these physicians in achieving licensure status that would allow them to practice is reported.

**Conclusions:** This analysis describes characteristics and outcomes of 50 physicians who sought assistance in returning to practice through a physician re-entry program. CPEP will present identified characteristics of participants in its Re-Entry Program, with highlights of any specific changes over time. While some trends exist, it is still not yet clear if a physician's demonstrated abilities, and therefore readiness to return to practice, can be predicted in advance. Using licensure status as a proxy for success, the study results find that physicians who participate in a re-entry process have a high rate of success in returning to practice – findings that are consistent with the previous study of program participants.