



Wisconsin Medical Society

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Wisconsin Medical Society adopts strategies to address psychiatrist shortage, increase access to mental and behavioral health services

Madison— With nearly 1.45 million residents living with mental or behavioral health issues, Wisconsin ranks fourth nationally in prevalence of mental illness; yet 49 percent of those residents do not receive care, according to a recent study conducted by the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on behalf of the Wisconsin Medical Society (Society).

The Society commissioned the study to help inform the efforts of its Mental and Behavioral Health Task Force, which is comprised of physician members of the Society from across the state. The task force met last Friday in Madison to adopt recommendations and begin implementing a plan to address this critical public health issue.

The report, “Combating the Psychiatrist Shortage in Wisconsin: Policy Recommendations for Increasing the Psychiatry Workforce and Access to Mental Health Services,” shows that there are roughly 1.5 psychiatrists for every 10,000 Wisconsin residents, but the ratio varies significantly across the state. Seventy-five percent of counties have fewer than one psychiatrist for every 10,000 residents and another 43 percent have fewer than one per every 30,000 residents. Twelve counties have no psychiatrists and another 11 have less than one full-time psychiatrist. In addition, nearly half of Wisconsin psychiatrists are older than 55 and one quarter are over 65. Within the next decade a large portion of the psychiatrist workforce is expected to retire, further exacerbating existing shortages.

“There’s no question that the shortage of psychiatrists and access to mental and behavioral health services in Wisconsin is a real problem, and the Society is committed to finding solutions,” said Society CEO Clyde “Bud” Chumbley, MD. “We also recognize there are other stakeholders in Wisconsin who share this goal and we look forward to partnering with them to make a difference.”

The Society plans to convene health system leaders, policymakers and other key stakeholders to explore the following strategies:

- Expanding graduate medical education opportunities through increasing the number of psychiatry residencies or creating rural psychiatry residency programs.
- Increasing the use of telepsychiatry and integrated care models.

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- Improvement of mental health reimbursement parity.
- Expanding programs designed to recruit medical students to train and practice as psychiatrists in Wisconsin.

“Our goals include adding two more psychiatric residency slots in Wisconsin, developing a proposal for a telepsychiatry pilot project in the state, and becoming a resource for medical students interested in psychiatry who may benefit from student loan forgiveness,” said Society President Molli Rolli, MD, a psychiatrist who also serves as chair of the task force. “We look forward to working with the administration and other partners in the months ahead to improve access to care for these patients and their families.”

Click [here](#) to access the full report.

With over 12,500 members dedicated to the best interests of their patients, the [Wisconsin Medical Society](#) is the largest association of medical doctors in the state and a trusted source for health policy leadership since 1841.

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