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200 Statistics on Physician Compensation

Written by Bob Herman | April 30, 2012

For hospitals and health systems, physician compensation will always be a hot-button issue. Branching out and attracting physicians is a core goal of any health organization, especially with the advent of accountable care organizations, but because physicians go through thorough and rigorous medical training to deliver the highest possible care to patients, they must be compensated appropriately.

The same certainly applies to nurses, frontline staff and all other members of the healthcare delivery system. However, as hospitals continue to purchase physician practices and physician reimbursement hangs in the balance, physician pay rises to the top of the bucket. The same holds true for independent practice physicians, as their declining revenue streams directly impact how much bread they take back to their table.

Highest-paid specialties

Surgical specialties again lead the pack in highest salaries and compensation packages. Cardiac and thoracic surgeons, orthopedic surgeons, noninvasive and invasive cardiologists, urologists, gastroenterologists, ophthalmologists and many others all had pay figures above \$350,000 and as high as \$532,000 (cardiac and thoracic surgeons).¹ Neurosurgeons are also among the highest-paid physicians, as their compensation routinely tops \$700,000, depending on the employment setting.²

The highest-earning physicians are most likely to be found in the North Central region of the United States, which comprises Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota.³ This could partially be attributed to less competition in smaller communities and sparsely-populated rural areas, which generally have to pay more to attract physicians.

Lowest-paid specialties

It's no surprise the lowest-paid physician specialties are all branches of primary care, as has been the trend for many years. Family medicine physicians, internists, pediatricians and hospitalists had some of the lowest median salaries.⁴ Family medicine physicians had the lowest overall compensation at a tick over \$208,000, a 1 percent decrease from 2010.

The Northeast part of the United States, which mostly includes New England, was the geographic locale most likely to pay physicians least.⁵ Although the costs of living are higher on the upper East Coast than many other places, the heavy competition and condensed populations have driven down the compensation levels.

Other trends

Compensation for men and women across all physician specialties continues to be one of the biggest discrepancies in the healthcare sector. In each of the 21 specialties that were examined, men made more than women. On average, men make 40 percent more than women across all the specialties, although that gap is smaller within the primary care groups and OB/GYN.⁶

Physicians that saw the biggest pay bumps between 2010 and 2011 include cardiologists, emergency medicine physicians, endocrinologists and hospitalists — all of whom saw at least a 5 percent spike in median salary.⁷

When asked if they considered themselves to be "rich," radiologists, oncologists and gastroenterologists were most likely to respond "yes." Internists, pediatricians, obstetricians and gynecologists had the lowest percentage of respondents who thought they were rich. Fifty-four percent of primary care physicians do not think they are fairly compensated, and across all specialties, it's almost a 50/50 split of those who think are and are not fairly compensated.⁸

Physician statistics — 2012

Here are 200 statistics on the latest physician compensation figures and trends across 21 specialties, based on the most recent data available from several physician compensation reports and surveys. The main physician compensation statistics covered in the following 21 specialties include median salary, median gross charges, median work relative value units, regional compensation, hospital versus multispecialty group practice salary and salary offers.

Note: Some of the statistics may seem higher or lower compared with others in each specialty. A collection of physician surveys were used to compile information. In addition, every specialty does not contain the same number of statistics, as some data was not

available for each specialty. Please read the following to understand where the statistics came from:

Median salary, median work RVUs, median gross charges are from the American Medical Group Association's 2011 Medical Group Compensation and Financial Survey, a 2011 report based on 2010 data. The survey collected responses from 239 medical groups that represent more than 51,700 physicians during the first quarter of 2011.

Mean salary for men, mean salary for women, highest-paying region, lowest-paying region, hospital-employed salary, multispecialty group practice salary are from Medscape's 2012 Physician Compensation Report. The report collected responses from 24,216 U.S. physicians across 25 specialty areas from Feb. 1, 2012, to Feb. 17, 2012.

Highest offered base salary and lowest offered base salary are from Merritt Hawkins' 2011 Review of Physician Recruiting Incentives. The report is based on 2,667 permanent physician search assignments that Merritt Hawkins engaged in from April 2010 to March 2011.

Anesthesiologists

Median salary: \$372,750 (0.61 percent increase from 2010)
Median gross charges: \$1,190,600
Mean salary for men: \$324,000
Mean salary for women: \$260,000
Highest-paying region: South Central (\$331,000)
Lowest-paying region: West (\$283,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$325,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$396,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$475,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$290,000

Cardiac and thoracic surgeons

Median salary: \$532,567 (0.1 percent decrease from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 9,612
Median gross charges: \$1,708,258

Cardiologists

Median salary: \$422,921 (5.20 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 7,126
Median gross charges: \$1,433,771
Mean salary for men: \$325,000
Mean salary for women: \$246,000
Highest-paying region: North Central (\$379,000)
Lowest-paying region: West (\$270,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$254,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$327,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$525,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$270,000

Dermatologists

Median salary: \$386,068 (2.9 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 7,440
Median gross charges: \$1,586,069

Mean salary for men: \$313,000
Mean salary for women: \$252,000
Highest-paying region: West (\$355,000)
Lowest-paying region: South Central (\$192,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$157,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$382,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$500,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$245,000

Diagnostic radiologists

Median salary: \$492,102 (2.95 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 7,597
Median gross charges: \$2,307,260

Emergency medicine physicians

Median salary: \$285,910 (6.37 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 6,933
Median gross charges: \$883,878
Mean salary for men: \$253,000
Mean salary for women: \$192,000
Highest-paying region: North Central (\$282,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northeast (\$211,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$247,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$223,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$380,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$160,000

Endocrinologists

Median salary: \$233,000 (6.46 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 4,446
Median gross charges: \$739,001
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$270,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$180,000

Family medicine physicians

Median salary: \$208,658 (0.1 percent decrease from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 4,977
Median gross charges: \$695,191
Mean salary for men: \$174,000
Mean salary for women: \$134,000
Highest-paying region: North Central (\$185,000)
Lowest-paying region: Mid-Atlantic (\$142,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$169,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$177,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$290,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$130,000

Gastroenterologists

Median salary: \$415,872 (2.68 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 8,073
Median gross charges: \$1,911,359
Mean salary for men: \$315,000
Mean salary for women: \$249,000
Highest-paying region: Northwest (\$372,000)
Lowest-paying region: Mid-Atlantic (\$278,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$205,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$311,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$505,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$300,000

General surgeons

Median salary: \$367,315 (2.86 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 7,081
Median gross charges: \$1,348,560
Mean salary for men: \$276,000
Mean salary for women: \$223,000
Highest-paying region: Great Lakes (\$297,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northwest (\$233,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$226,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$324,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$450,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$205,000

Hematologists/medical oncologists

Median salary: \$325,000 (1.28 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 4,318
Median gross charges: \$661,792
Mean salary for men: \$276,000
Mean salary for women: \$224,000
Highest-paying region: Southwest (\$342,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northeast (\$207,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$190,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$347,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$550,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$250,000

Hospitalists (internal medicine)

Median salary: \$229,294 (6.29 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 3,914
Median gross charges: \$430,581
Median salary for men: \$335,000
Median salary for women: \$275,000
Highest-paying region: Southern (\$247,000)
Lowest-paying region: Eastern (\$212,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$221,928

Partner private practice salary: \$218,154
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$305,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$160,000

Internal medicine physicians

Median salary: \$219,500 (2.42 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 4,838
Median gross charges: \$716,181
Mean salary for men: \$175,000
Mean salary for women: \$149,000
Highest-paying region: South Central (\$189,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northeast (\$151,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$163,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$194,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$285,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$130,000

Neurologists

Median salary: \$246,500 (4.23 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 4,868
Median gross charges: \$790,046
Mean salary for men: \$198,000
Mean salary for women: \$160,000
Highest-paying region: Southeast (\$209,000)
Lowest-paying region: Southwest (\$155,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$150,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$227,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$345,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$160,000

Obstetricians/gynecologists (general)

Median salary: \$302,638 (2.33 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 6,639
Median gross charges: \$1,196,029
Mean salary for men: \$234,000
Mean salary for women: \$206,000
Highest-paying region: Great Lakes (\$245,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northeast (\$205,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$194,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$233,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$360,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$220,000

Ophthalmologists

Median salary: \$356,339 (3.6 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 8,821
Median gross charges: \$1,687,537
Mean salary for men: \$295,000

Mean salary for women: \$216,000
Highest-paying region: West (\$315,000)
Lowest-paying region: Southeast (\$253,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$147,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$289,000

Orthopedic surgeons

Median salary: \$501,808 (0.23 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 8,026
Median gross charges: \$1,841,857
Mean salary for men: \$326,000
Mean salary for women: \$240,000
Highest-paying region: West (\$350,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northeast (\$303,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$251,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$340,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$700,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$300,000

Otolaryngologists

Median salary: \$377,430 (2.35 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 6,926
Median gross charges: \$1,518,509
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$500,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$230,000

Pediatricians (general)

Median salary: \$213,379 (1.67 percent increase from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 5,089
Median gross charges: \$807,449
Mean salary for men: \$180,000
Mean salary for women: \$137,000
Highest-paying region: North Central (\$183,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northeast/West (\$146,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$150,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$166,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$250,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$120,000

Pulmonologists

Median salary: \$303,125 (1.21 percent decrease from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 6,014
Median gross charges: \$876,283
Mean salary for men: \$248,000
Mean salary for women: \$221,000
Highest-paying region: South Central (\$328,000)
Lowest-paying region: Northeast (\$212,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$174,000

Multispecialty group practice salary: \$284,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$430,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$200,000

Urologists

Median salary: \$413,746 (0.05 percent decrease from 2010)
Median work RVUs: 7,503
Median gross charges: \$1,751,208
Mean salary for men: \$313,000
Mean salary for women: \$253,000
Highest-paying region: West (\$343,000)
Lowest-paying region: Mid-Atlantic (\$272,000)
Hospital-employed salary: \$192,000
Multispecialty group practice salary: \$397,000
Highest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$550,000
Lowest offered base salary (not including bonuses): \$320,000

¹ American Medical Group Association's *2011 Medical Group Compensation and Financial Survey*.

² Medical Group Management Association's *Physician Compensation and Production Survey: 2011 Report Based on 2010 Data*.

³ Medscape's *2012 Physician Compensation Report*.

⁴ American Medical Group Association's *2011 Medical Group Compensation and Financial Survey*.

⁵ Medscape's *2012 Physician Compensation Report*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ American Medical Group Association's *2011 Medical Group Compensation and Financial Survey*.

⁸ Medscape's *2012 Physician Compensation Report*.

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