Efficiency improvements aid physician capacity

December 20 2013

(HealthDay)—Efforts aimed at improving the efficiency of primary care practices can make impacts in alleviating physician shortages through improved primary care capacity of existing practices, according to an analysis published in the November issue of *Health Affairs*.

Scott A. Shipman, M.D., M.P.H., from the Association of American Medical Colleges in Washington, D.C., and Christine A. Sinsky, M.D., from Medical Associates Clinic and Health Plans in Dubuque, Iowa, examine strategy to address the shortage of primary care physicians. They highlight practices that have addressed inefficiency and waste.

The researchers found that delegating certain administrative tasks such

as managing task lists in the electronic health record can give physicians more time to see additional patients. Additionally, physicians' efficiency and capacity have been improved with the use of flow managers who guide physicians from task to task throughout the clinical day. Seemingly inconsequential moves, such as placing a printer in every exam room can save each physician 20 minutes per day. System-wide improvements could have an even greater impact on physician capacity, while potentially reducing physician burnout and its implications for the quality of care.

"If widely adopted, small efforts to empower non-physicians, reengineer workflows, exploit technology, and update policies to eliminate wasted effort could yield the capacity for millions of additional patient visits per year in the United States," the authors write.

More information: Abstract
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Citation: Efficiency improvements aid physician capacity (2013, December 20) retrieved 18 April 2024 from
https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-efficiency-aid-physician-capacity.html

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