

New report warns current policies will not avert health workforce crisis

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Without immediate action to develop an integrated, comprehensive, national health workforce policy, the U.S. is at risk of losing its status as the global health care leader, states a new report released by the Association of Academic Health Centers. The report was funded in part by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation.

Out of Order, Out of Time: The State of the Nation's Health Workforce warns that the nation is running out of time to ensure an adequate health workforce to meet the needs of our aging population, such as the increased demand for health services and other critical socioeconomic challenges for health care.

"It is essential that the nation take a critical look at its policymaking framework that has created a system for the health workforce that may no longer be adaptable to changing national health needs," said AAHC President and CEO Dr. Steven A. Wartman. "We also need action because the workforce plays such a pivotal role in biomedical research and science as well as in the U.S. economy and jobs creation," he added.

Key recommendations in the report include:

- Making health workforce a priority domestic policy issue;
- Developing an integrated, comprehensive national health workforce policy that recognizes and compensates for the inherent weaknesses and vulnerabilities of current decentralized multi-stakeholder decision-making; and

-- Establishing a national planning body to create a national workforce agenda and promote a national health workforce policy that ensures the nation's health and economic well-being. Diverse federal and state agencies, along with multiple public and private stakeholders, should participate.

If coordinated action at the national level is not taken, the workforce will "continue to be plagued by the problems that arise from fragmented and inconsistent policymaking," according to the report. Wartman said academic health center leaders have a unique vantage point on the workforce, given the leadership role their institutions play in education, research, and patient care. "Academic health center leaders recognize the urgent need for action and are committed to changing the nation's approach to the health workforce as laid out in this report," concluded Wartman.

On the Net: www.aahcdc.org

Source: Association of Academic Health Centers

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