

Doctors' pay increases lag other health professionals

November 27 2012



Since 1987, their growth in income has been much less than that of pharmacists, others, study finds.

(HealthDay)—The incomes of U.S. doctors have grown less than the incomes of other health professionals over the past few decades, a new study indicates.

Researchers analyzed data collected between 1987 and 2010 from more than 30,500 health professionals across the country, including nearly 6,300 physicians, and found that the median income among doctors was \$143,963 during 1987-1990 and \$157,751 during 2006-2010. That's an increase of \$13,788 (9.6 percent). Among other health care professionals, median income rose \$30,938 (44 percent) during the same period.

The researchers also found that adjusted earnings for physicians declined 1.6 percent between 1996-2000 and 2006-2010, but increased 34.4 percent for other [health care professionals](#), such as pharmacists.

The findings were published in the Nov. 28 issue of the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#).

"Despite attention paid to higher earnings of physicians in the United States compared with other countries, physician earnings grew less than those of other health professionals in the last 15 years. Possible explanations include managed care growth, Medicaid payment cuts, sluggish [Medicare payment](#) growth or bargaining by insurance companies. Despite lack of recent growth, physician earnings remain higher than other occupations," study author Seth Seabury, of the nonprofit RAND Corp., said in a journal news release.

"Understanding trends in physician earnings is important, given health care cost growth and proposed Medicare physician fee reductions," he noted. "Comparing physicians and other [health professionals](#) is necessary to assess whether physician labor earnings have outpaced or lagged behind [earnings growth](#) of other workers in the health care sector."

More information: Read about how the demand for family physicians is translating into [salary increases](#).

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Citation: Doctors' pay increases lag other health professionals (2012, November 27) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-11-doctors-lag-health-professionals.html>

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