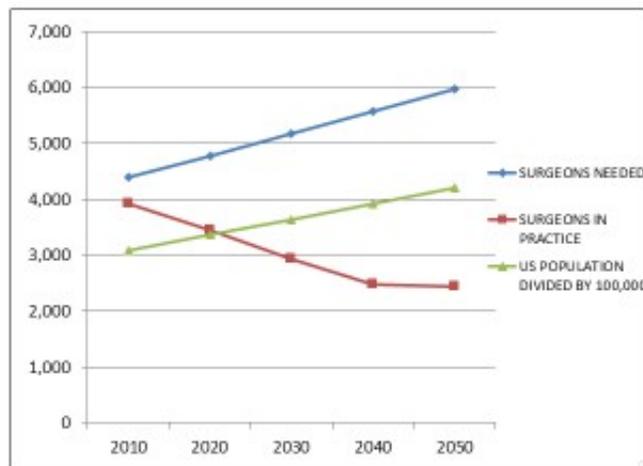


Critical shortage of cardiothoracic surgeons anticipated by 2035

May 17 2016



Big Picture for Cardiothoracic Surgery



This graph shows the big picture for cardiothoracic surgery. Credit: The Ohio State University

Using projections based on data from the American Board of Thoracic Surgery, investigators from The Ohio State University are issuing a warning to thoracic surgeons and public health officials that we are heading toward a crisis in being able to provide adequate cardiothoracic

surgical services to meet future demand. In a presentation at the 96th AATS Annual Meeting, investigators argue that the crisis stems from both a shortage of trained professionals and rising demand from an aging population. They add that expecting surgeons to dramatically increase their daily workload to meet these demands is unrealistic.

Looking ahead to 2035, a growing disparity is projected between the number of cardiothoracic [surgeons](#) needed and the number available. In a presentation at the 96th AATS Annual Meeting, researchers cite such trends as fewer trainees in surgery residency programs, more exam failures, and fewer American Board of Thoracic Surgery certifications at a time when an aging population will require more cardiothoracic surgical services. They estimate that cardiothoracic surgeons would have to increase their caseload by 121% to meet demand, something that is not feasible.

"We predict that there will be an inability to provide cardiothoracic services in 2035 due to the shortage of surgeons and an unknown but increasing caseload. The increase in the caseload for cardiothoracic surgeons will be a result of not only the increase in the general population, but especially an increase in the population manifesting both cardiovascular disease as well as thoracic malignancies," explained Susan Moffat-Bruce, MD, PhD, MBA, of the Department of Surgery, Division of Thoracic Surgery, at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Columbus (OH).

The investigators used data from the U.S. Census and the Society of Thoracic Surgery. They found in 2010 there were approximately 4,000 cardiothoracic surgeons who performed more than 530,000 cases. By 2030, they project that there will be about 3,000 cardiothoracic surgeons available to cover about 854,000 cases. Of the 61% increase in the number of cases, the researchers anticipate a 54% increase in heart surgery cases, a 70% increase in lung cancer cases, and a 64% increase

in esophageal cancer cases.

Of the surgical specialties analyzed, the increase in future workload is expected to be the greatest for cardiothoracic surgeons. The investigators anticipate that the caseload for each cardiothoracic surgeon would increase from 135 per year to 299 per year, an increase of 121%. "We feel this is not feasible," commented Dr. Moffatt-Bruce, adding, "This is a sign of a problem that must be addressed now. We do not have the liberty to wait."

More information: "Providing Cardiothoracic Services in 2035: Signs of Trouble Ahead," by Susan Moffatt-Bruce, MD, PhD, MBA, Juan Crestanello, MD, David Way, MS, Thomas Williams, MD, PhD. Presentation at the 96th AATS Annual Meeting, May 14-18, 2016, Baltimore, MD, during the Plenary Scientific Session on May 17, 2016. aats.org/annualmeetin

Provided by American Association for Thoracic Surgery

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