

Board News

Paul R. Young, MD

It's that time of year again to report on demographic data of Diplomates of the ABFP. These data are collected from information provided by applicants for the certification and recertification examinations. I have selected data sets that have been previously reported in order to demonstrate trends, if any.

If we look at all current Diplomates, including those who have not yet recertified, the total is 41,597, compared with 40,260 last year. The mean age is 43.45 compared with 43.01 on 1 January 1993. The median age rose from 40.0 to 41.07, and the mode rose from 38 to 40. Women now comprise 20.6 percent of the Diplomate population, an increase from 19.5 percent the year previous. The percentage of residency trained Diplomates rose from 79.7 percent to 81.4 percent.

There are a few changes suggesting trends among the recertified Diplomate population. The total number rose from 25,038 to 26,464. This includes all Diplomates recertified from 1987 through 1993. Those who indicated they were in independent or solo practice fell from 31.2 percent to 28.4 percent. Those in partnerships fell from 18.0 percent to 17.1 percent. Diplomates in group practice rose from 29.5 percent to 31.9 percent and in HMOs from 4.8 percent to 4.9 percent.

If we examine those Diplomates who recertified in 1993, the "n" is 4195. Of these, 22.6 percent were in solo practice, 16.8 percent in partnership, 36.4 percent group, and 4.9 percent HMO.

The distribution of Diplomates by community size seems to have changed only slightly for the total recertified Diplomate group: 34.5 percent practiced in communities with fewer than 25,000 population compared with 35 percent the year before, and 46.7 percent practiced in communities with fewer than 50,000 population compared with 50 percent the year before. The mode is 14.5 percent who practiced in communities from 10,000 to 24,999 population.

The percentage of family physicians who provide maternal care is often of general interest. Our data reveal that in the recertified group (n=26,464), 71.9 percent managed no pregnancies compared with 66.8 percent last year. There were, however, 26.3 percent who managed 1 to 25 pregnancies compared with 16.7 percent last year. Also, 1.5 percent managed 26 to 50 pregnancies compared with 10.2 percent last year.

Among the family physicians who were recertified in 1993 (n=4195), 71.4 percent managed no pregnancies, 26.3 percent managed 1 to 25 pregnancies and 2.0 percent managed 26 to 50 pregnancies.

In general, it would appear: (1) there is a slight trend away from solo practice, (2) there are increasing numbers of women in the specialty, and (3) obstetrics is still practiced by about 30 percent of Diplomates. We will attempt to obtain more specific data about type of practice, especially with the suspected increase in managed care systems.