SHM Fact Sheet: About Hospital Medicine

Across the country, there are more than 34,000 hospitalists practicing in 3,300 large hospitals and half of all community hospitals.

What is hospital medicine?

Hospital medicine *is a medical specialty dedicated to the delivery of comprehensive medical care to hospitalized patients.*

Practitioners of hospital medicine include physicians ("hospitalists") and non-physician providers who engage in clinical care, teaching, research, or leadership in the field of general hospital medicine. In addition to their core expertise managing the clinical problems of acutely ill, hospitalized patients, hospital medicine practitioners work to enhance the performance of hospitals and healthcare systems.

What is a hospitalist?

A ***hospitalist*** *is a physician who specializes in the practice of hospital medicine.*

Following medical school, hospitalists typically undergo residency training in general internal medicine, general pediatrics, or family practice, but may also receive training in other medical disciplines. There are currently more than 30,000 hospitalists practicing in more than 3,300 hospitals, and 80% of hospitals with over 200 beds.

Some hospitalists qualify to be recognized further in the specialty through SHM's Fellow in Hospital Medicine (FHM), SHM's Senior Fellow in Hospital Medicine (SFHM), Master of Hospital Medicine (MHM) and designation or the American Board of Internal Medicine's Recognition of Focused Practice (RFP) in Hospital Medicine.

In addition to patient care, hospitalists are often involved in efforts to improve the quality of healthcare delivery in the hospital.

Specialty Breakdown by Training: According to SHM's 2007-2008 Productivity & Compensation Survey, 88% of hospitalists are trained in General Internal Medicine. Other specialty breakdowns are below:

- General Peds: 6.5%
- IM Subspecialty: 4.0%
- Family Practice: 3.7%
- IM/Peds: 3.1%
- Peds Subspecialty: 0.4%

Employment Model: The 2007-2008Survey also indicates 40% of hospitalists are employed by hospitals or hospital corporations. Below is the breakdown of other hospitalist employers:

- Academic Hospital Medicine Programs: 18%
- Local Hospitalist Only Group: 14.5%
- Multi-Specialty/Primary Care Medical Group: 14.5%
- Multi-State Hospitalist Only Group: 13%

Published Studies: Hospital Medicine represents the future of health care. Because of the remarkable outcomes realized thus far, the field is poised to play a major role in providing leadership and energy as healthcare is reshaped in the coming years. According to published studies:

- **Patients more satisfied at facilities with hospitalists.** A study of 1,777 hospitals and 2.6 million patients found that facilities with hospitalists resulted in significantly higher nurse and patient satisfaction. (*Press Ganey, 2010*)
- **Rehospitalization is a major drain on Medicare.** One in five hospitalized patients is readmitted to the hospital within a month of their discharge. Nationally, unplanned readmissions cost Medicare $17.4 billion each year, making estimates about the total cost even higher. (*New England Journal of Medicine,* April 2009)
- **Hospitalists can reduce rehospitalizations and improve coordination of care.** A 2008 study found that hospitalists at a community hospital reduced the risk of patient readmissions by 41.8% and increased coordination of care by 13.2%. (*Human Resource Management*, Winter 2008)
- **Teamwork during discharge reduces rehospitalization.** Teamwork across disciplines in the hospital, which is often coordinated by a hospitalist, improves the transition from hospital to home for older patients with fewer return visits to the hospital, a reduction in morbidity rates and healthcare costs while positively impacting the quality of life and discharge satisfaction. (*The Journal of American Geriatrics*, September 2009)
- **The hospitalist model improves quality of care and efficiency.** Implementation of hospitalist programs decrease hospital costs by 13.4% and length of stay for patients by 16.6% while improving quality and patient satisfaction. (*Journal of American Medical Association*, January 2002)

Society of Hospital Medicine • 1500 Spring Garden Street • Suite 501 • Philadelphia, PA 19130

(800) 843-3360 • www.hospitalmedicine.org

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