



Urgent Care Is on the Rise, Hospitals on the Decline in Searching for Clinical Hires

This is an interesting time to be in the healthcare field. We keep hearing (and are starting to see the effects of) a serious shortage in available physicians across multiple settings, but most direly in primary care. To compensate, many practices are relying more on the skills and high-level training of nurse practitioners and physician assistants, now known collectively as advanced practice providers (APPs).

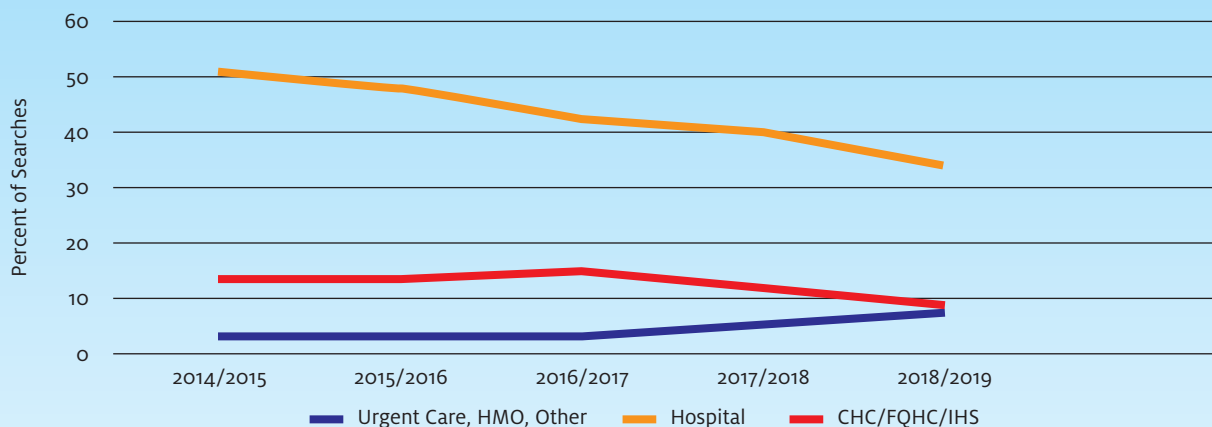
At the same time, consumers continue to demonstrate a growing preference for walk-in care facilities where they don't necessarily have an ongoing relationship with a clinician. What's more, they clearly don't want to be tied down to one location. They want to decide where they're going when they need to go, and they prefer to not be inconvenienced by driving across town or having to hop from one office to another.

Further, hospital systems and venture capitalists are recognizing the economic value to be found in these growing sectors. Viewing it from 30,000 feet, it looks like the convergence of

several factors that are extremely favorable to urgent care. And it appears the job market is following suit.

According to Merritt Hawkins' 2019 Review of Physician and Advanced Practitioner Recruiting Incentives, which reflects research into urgent care centers, hospitals, medical groups, federally qualified health centers, academic centers, and "others," most organizations engaged in recruiting physicians today are employing physicians outright rather than placing them in private practices. The question, given consolidation among disparate practice settings, is where are they employing them? The Merritt Hawkins paper clearly states that hospitals are still the most prevalent setting when it comes to physician search assignments. It's equally clear, however, that the hospital figures are dropping. So are those for community health centers, federally qualified health centers, and Indian Health Services—while urgent care and HMO numbers are increasing. (See the graph below). ■

TRENDS IN SEARCHING FOR CLINICIANS, BY SETTING



CHC, community health center; FQHC, federally qualified health centers; IHS, Indian Health Service

Data source: 2019 Review of Physician and Advanced Practitioner Recruiting Incentives. Merritt Hawkins. Available at: <https://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/content/dam/UHG/PDF/2019/UHG-Avoidable-ED-Visits.pdf>. Accessed August 2, 2019.