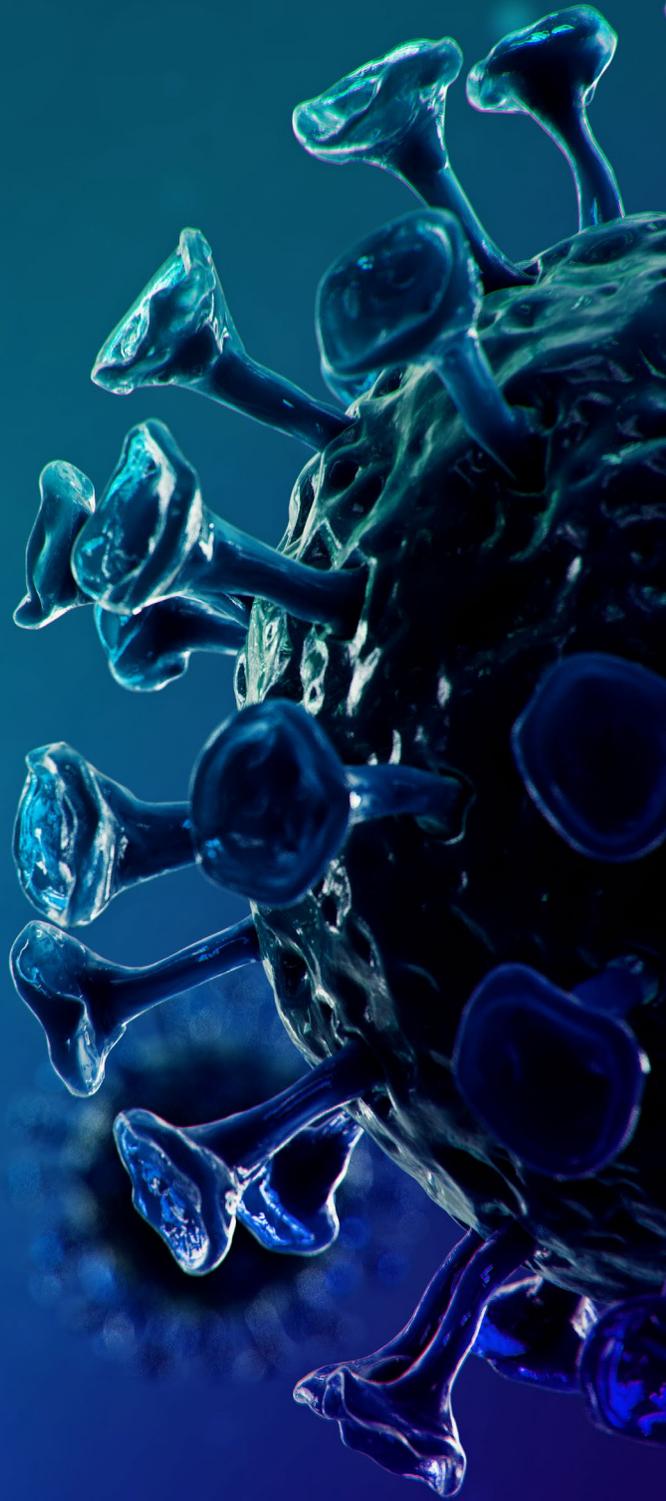


# PHYSICIANS AND COVID-19

A Survey Examining How Physicians Are Being Affected by and Are Responding to the Coronavirus Pandemic



Conducted By Merritt Hawkins in Collaboration with The Physicians Foundation.  
Copyright. April, 2020. Merritt Hawkins and The Physicians Foundation

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

OVERVIEW - 3

---

QUESTIONS - 4

---

METHODOLOGY - 10

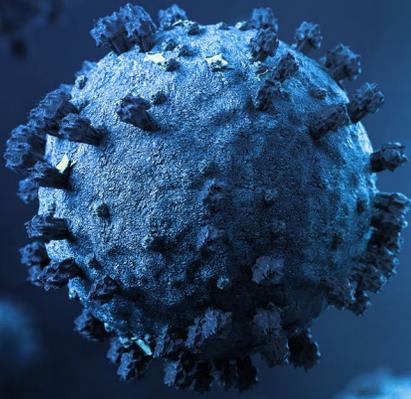
---

ABOUT MERRITT HAWKINS - 10

---

ABOUT THE PHYSICIANS FOUNDATION - 11





# OVERVIEW

For the last several months the nation’s attention has been transfixed by the COVID-19 epidemic, which is affecting virtually every person, enterprise and organization in the country. Those on the front lines of healthcare, including physicians, are particularly affected by the virus.

In this survey, Merritt Hawkins, in collaboration with The Physicians Foundation, conducts a brief “pulse check” of physicians to determine how they are being affected by and responding to COVID-19.

The survey represents a preliminary effort to gauge the practice patterns and perspectives

of physicians, specifically in regard to COVID-19. A much more [comprehensive physician survey](#) is conducted every other year by The Physicians Foundation in concert with Merritt Hawkins, providing comprehensive data on a wide range of topics pertaining to physician morale, physician career plans, practice characteristics, and more.

The Physicians Foundation intends to conduct and release the results of its biennial **Survey of America’s Physicians** later this year.

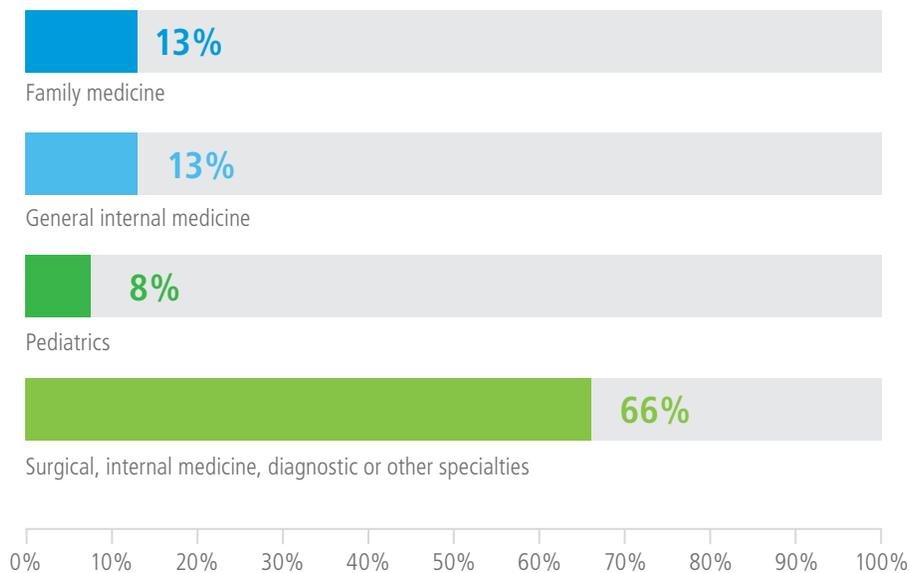
Following is a summary of *Physicians and COVID-19* survey questions and responses.



# QUESTIONS ASKED AND RESPONSES RECEIVED

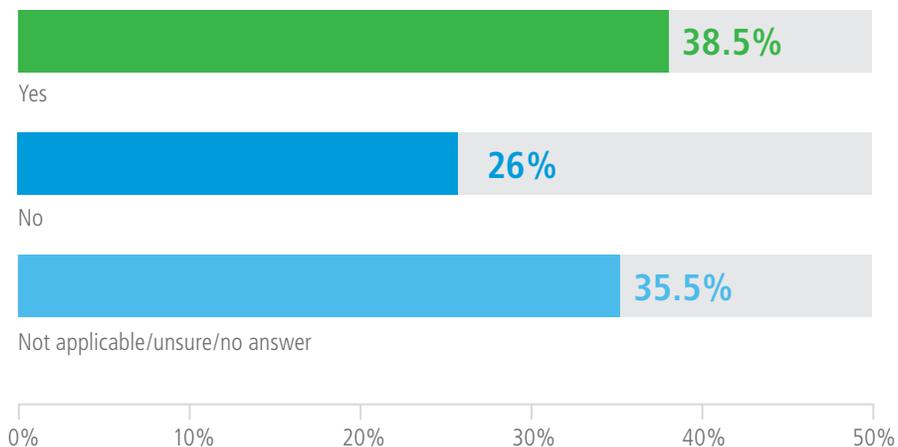
The survey asked physicians to indicate their specialties and select various ways in which they are being affected by and are responding to the COVID-19 epidemic.

## WHAT IS YOUR SPECIALTY?



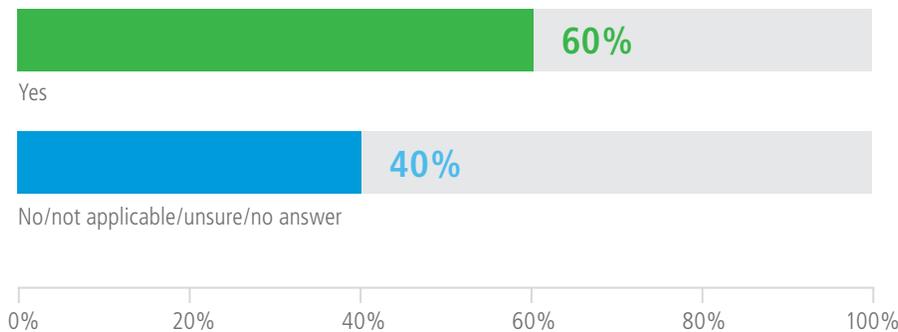
Approximately one-third of survey respondents (34%) practice primary care medicine (family medicine, general internal medicine, pediatrics) while two thirds (64%) are surgical, medical and diagnostic specialists and subspecialists. This reflects the overall physician workforce, which is 33% composed of primary care physicians and 67% composed of specialists, according to the American Medical Association’s Physician Masterfile.

### ARE YOU SEEING COVID-19 PATIENTS?



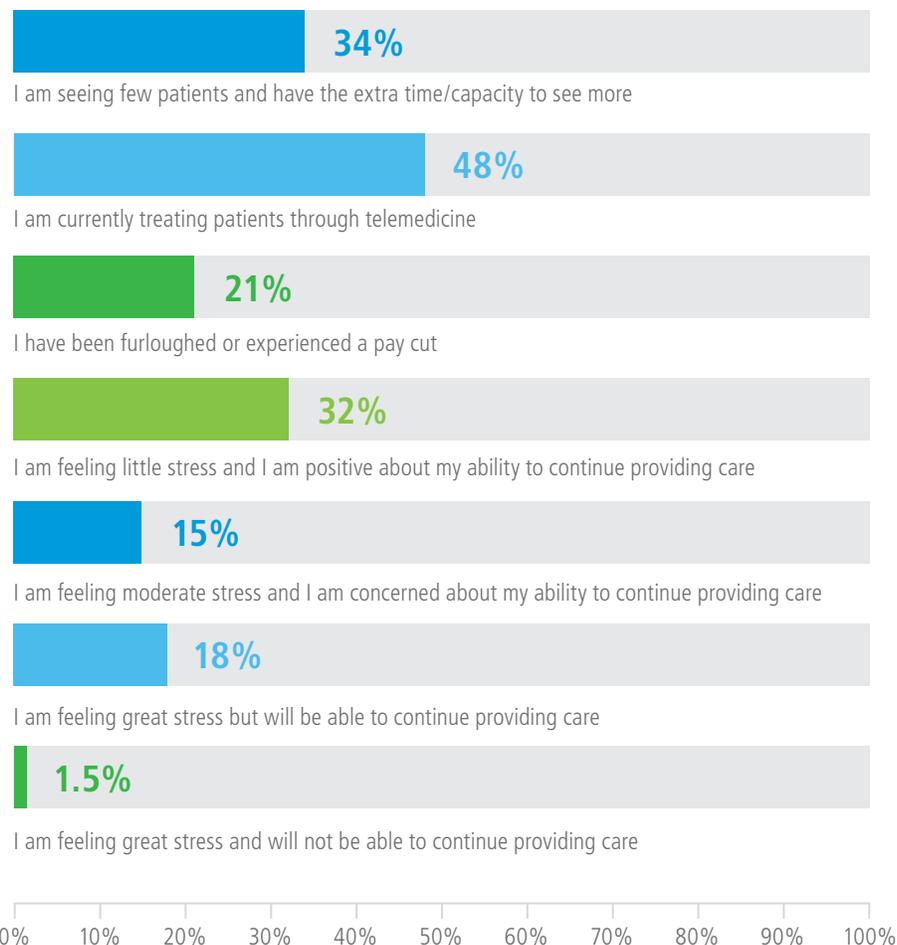
Fewer than half of physicians (38.5%) indicate they are seeing COVID-19 patients, while the majority are not seeing them, unsure, do not find the question applicable, etc. The survey suggests that the task of treating COVID-19 patients is concentrated among a minority of physicians.

### IF YOU ARE NOT SEEING COVID-19 PATIENTS, ARE YOU WILLING TO DO SO?

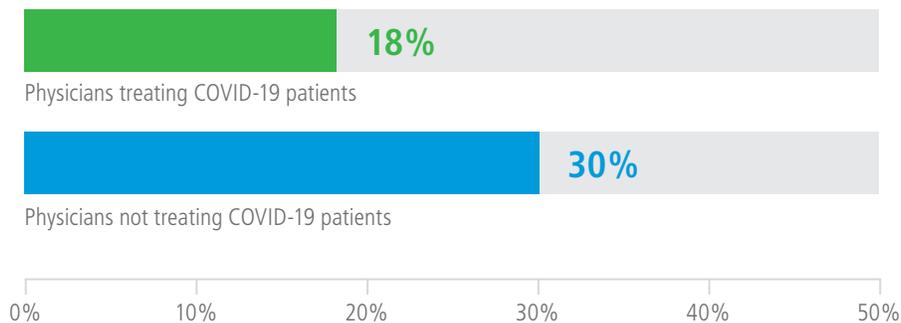


The majority of physicians (60%) who are not seeing COVID-19 patients are willing to do so, suggesting that the physician workforce has extra capacity to bring to bear on the pandemic, with many doctors willing to assume the risk, responsibilities and (presumably) the rewards of treating those infected with the virus.

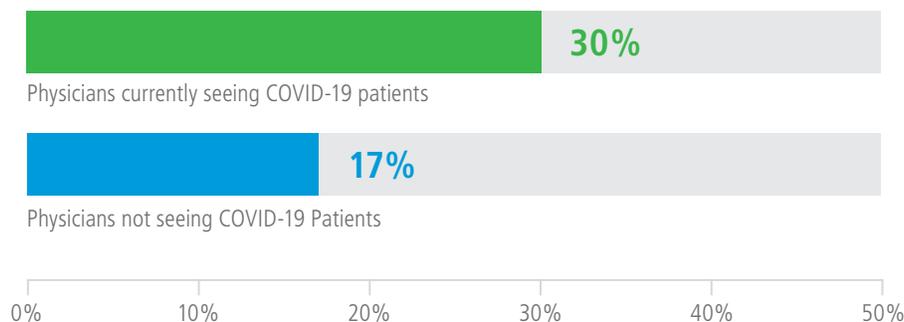
### PLEASE CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY:



### HAVE BEEN FURLOUGHED OR EXPERIENCED A PAY CUT:



### FEELING GREAT STRESS BUT WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE CARE:



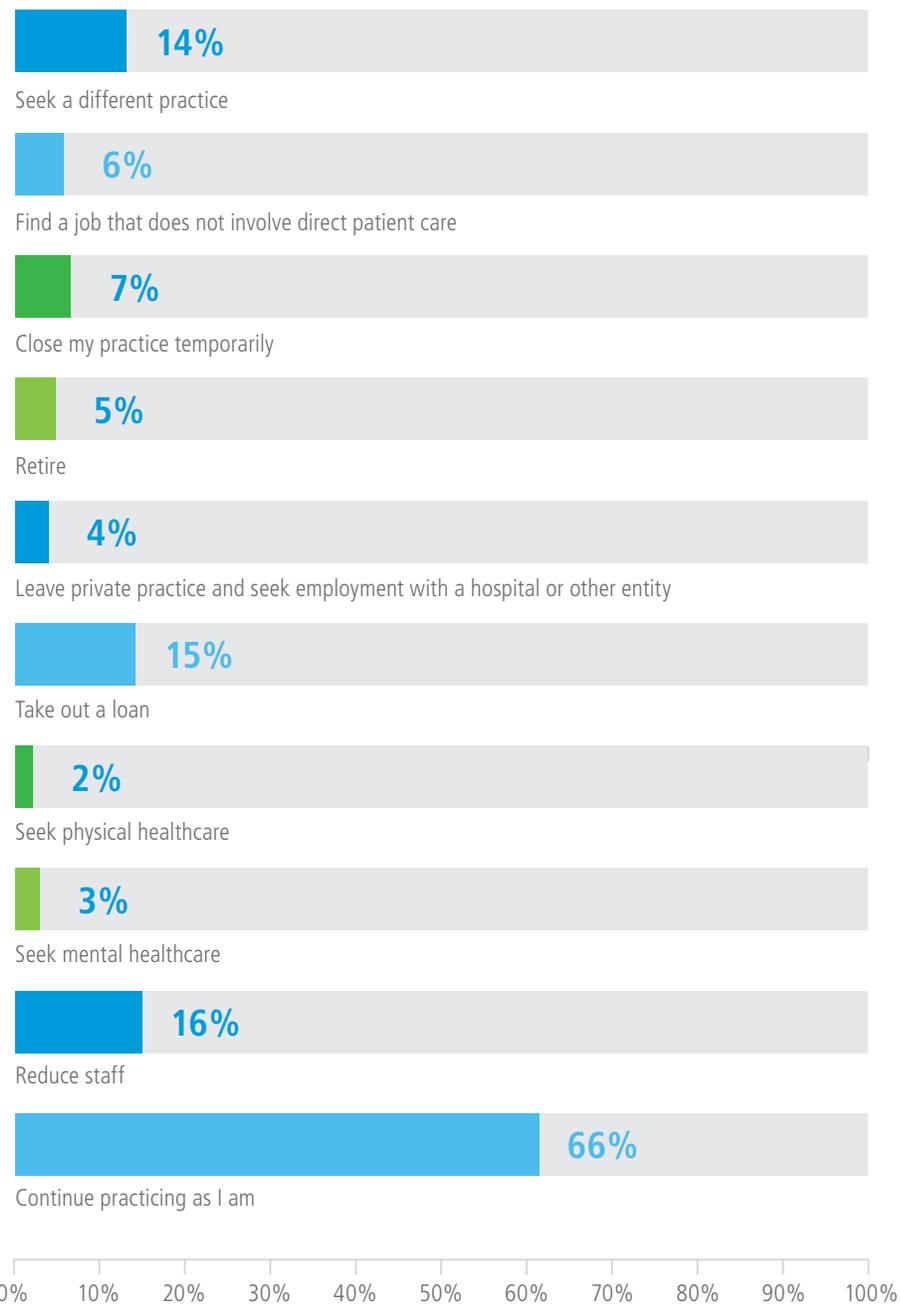
Almost one half of physicians indicate they are seeing patients through telemedicine. The Physicians Foundation’s 2018 *Survey of America’s Physicians*, conducted by Merritt Hawkins, indicated that two years ago, only approximately 18% of physicians were treating patients through telemedicine. The emergence of the virus has clearly accelerated the use of technological platforms used to treat patients remotely.

Increase of telemedicine usage is likely to prove a boon to both patients and physicians. While the impetus for this was a healthcare crisis, in the long run patient access, adherence to their individualized medical care plans, and improvement in quality and outcomes may be a positive result. The Physicians Foundation, American Medical Association, Florida Medical Association, Massachusetts Medical Society and Texas Medical Association, recently launched The Telehealth Initiative, which helps physicians implement telehealth services. The Initiative is providing free, online access to resources to encourage all physicians to consider telehealth services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resources can be accessed at [www.PhysiciansFoundation.org/the-telehealth-initiative](http://www.PhysiciansFoundation.org/the-telehealth-initiative).

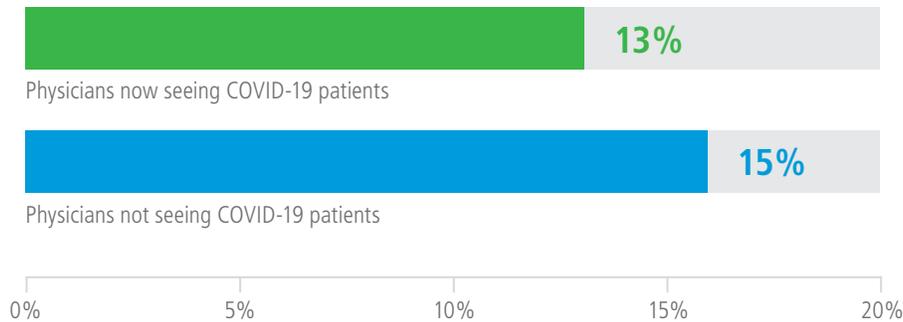
While many physicians surveyed are feeling stress, the great majority indicate they will continue to see patients. Those currently treating COVID-19 patients are more likely to be feeling great stress than those who are not, but the great majority of both groups are willing to continue treating patients.

About one-fifth of physicians (21%) indicate they have experienced a furlough or pay cut. The number is higher for those not treating COVID-19 patients (30%) than it is for those who are seeing COVID-19 patients (18%).

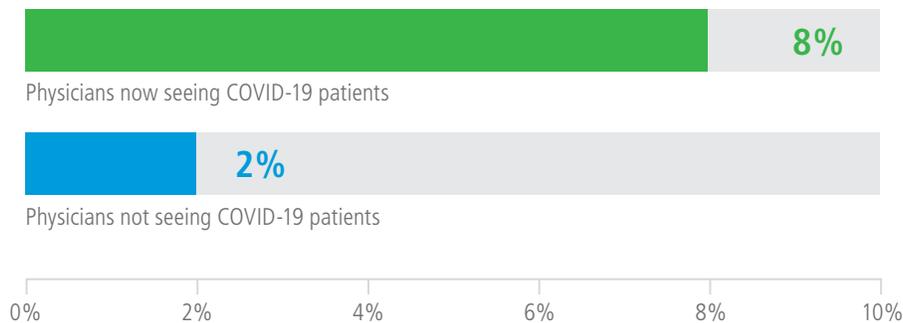
**PLEASE CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY:  
AS A RESULT OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC,  
I HAVE OR WILL:**



### WILL SEEK A DIFFERENT PRACTICE:



### WILL SEEK PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTHCARE:



It is concerning to note that while the majority of physicians (66%) plan to keep practicing as they are even in light of the coronavirus pandemic, a substantial minority plan to make career changes that will disrupt or reduce access to patient care. About one-third (32%) plan to change practices, opt out of patient care roles, close their practices temporarily, or retire.

Slightly more physicians who are not seeing COVID-19 patients (15%) plan to seek a different practice than those seeing COVID-19 patients (13%). More physicians now seeing COVID-19 patients (8%) plan to seek physical or mental healthcare than those not seeing COVID-19 patients (2%).

Prior to the pandemic, physicians were already facing a number of stress factors eroding their morale and potentially limiting patient access to their services, trends tracked by The Physicians Foundation through its biennial *Survey of America’s Physicians*. These trends were of concern prior to the pandemic due to the growing shortage of physicians nationwide.

The coronavirus is likely to add to these stresses, and more attention therefore needs to be paid to physician well-being, both during the current crisis and after it has been contained to help ensure an adequate and engaged physician workforce.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey was sent by email on April 11th through April 13th, 2020 to a total of approximately 55,000 physicians in Merritt Hawkins' database. Completed surveys were received from 842 physicians. The survey has a margin of error (MOE) of +/- 3.5%.

## ABOUT MERRITT HAWKINS

Merritt Hawkins is a national healthcare search and consulting firm specializing in the recruitment of physicians in all medical specialties, physician leaders, and advanced practice professionals. Now marking 33 years of service to the healthcare industry, Merritt Hawkins is a company of AMN Healthcare (NYSE: AMN), the nation's largest healthcare staffing organization and the industry innovator of healthcare workforce solutions.

This survey is part of Merritt Hawkins' ongoing thought leadership efforts, which include surveys and white papers conducted for Merritt Hawkins' proprietary use as well as surveys, white papers and analyses Merritt Hawkins has completed on behalf of prominent third parties, including The Physicians Foundation, the Indian Health Service, the American Academy of Physicians Assistants, Trinity University, Texas Hospital Trustees, the North Texas Regional Extension Center/Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology, the Society for Vascular Surgery, the Maryland State Medical Society, the American Academy of Surgical Administrators, the Association of Managers of Gynecology and Obstetrics and Subcommittees of the Congress of the United States. For more information visit [www.merrithawkins.com](http://www.merrithawkins.com).

## ABOUT THE PHYSICIANS FOUNDATION

The Physicians Foundation is a nonprofit seeking to advance the work of practicing physicians and help them facilitate the delivery of high-quality health care to patients. As the health care system in America continues to evolve, The Physicians Foundation is steadfast in its determination to strengthen the physician-patient relationship and assist physicians in sustaining their medical practices in today's practice environment. It pursues its mission through a variety of activities including grant-making, research, white papers and policy studies. Since 2005, the Foundation has awarded numerous multi-year grants totaling more than \$50 million. In addition, the Foundation focuses on the following core areas: physician leadership, physician wellness, physician practice trends, social determinants of health and the impact of health care reform on physicians and patients. For more information, visit [www.PhysiciansFoundation.org](http://www.PhysiciansFoundation.org).

For additional information about Merritt Hawkins' thought leadership resources and services contact:



### **Merritt Hawkins / Corporate**

8840 Cypress Waters Drive, Ste. 300  
Dallas, Texas 75019  
(800) 876-0500

### **Merritt Hawkins / Eastern Regional Office**

100 Mansell Ct., E, Ste. 500  
Roswell, Georgia 30076  
(800) 306-1330

[merritthawkins.com](http://merritthawkins.com)



Conducted By Merritt Hawkins in Collaboration with The Physicians Foundation.  
Copyright. April, 2020. Merritt Hawkins and The Physicians Foundation