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2019 Issue Brief Strengthening Graduate Medical Education

Issue

Strengthening Graduate Medical Education (GME) is essential due to the increasing demand for healthcare services associated with the rapidly aging population, physician shortages, and the recent increases in the number of new patients with access to health insurance.

Physicians graduating as a M.D. or D.O. will spend three to seven years in a residency program and much of the funding for these programs comes from Medicare in the form of direct payments (to cover the cost of educating the residents) or indirect payments (to cover the cost of treating complex patients at teaching hospitals). Due to the years of training required to become a physician, we must address projected shortages now so that patients will have access to the care they need.

Multispecialty medical groups and integrated delivery systems employ a large number of physicians and require an adequate pool of residency-trained physicians to meet the increasing demand for care. Despite the growing need due to the aging population, Congress has not increased the number of Medicare funded residency slots since the implementation of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act. Unless Congress lifts the cap on federally funded residency slots, there will not be enough physicians to care for the growing elderly population as well as replace the currently aging physician workforce.

AMGA Asks Congress to:

Preserve and enhance essential GME funding to maintain and build a physician workforce that can manage the continuously growing patient population.