Top 10 Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is The Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce?

Created by state legislation in 2012, the Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce (OMPW) is dedicated to addressing the maldistribution and shortage of physicians in a state with the lowest per capita physician supply in the nation. OMPW collects information regarding the state’s overall physician workforce, demographics, and physician access issues throughout the state. The office’s initial emphasis focuses upon establishing a strong primary care foundation.

Our office is located at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) by statute. As outlined in Mississippi Code, Title 41, Chapter 123, one of OMPW’s primary missions is to address primary care physician workforce needs by nurturing and financially assisting the creation of American Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredited family medicine residency programs. Additional duties include evaluating, fostering, and developing a strategy to address an adequate, appropriately distributed physician workforce in all specialties. Through these efforts, OMPW provides assistance and recommendations to the state’s leadership regarding current and future physician workforce needs.

2) How can I contact OMPW?

There are several different ways to contact our office:

- **Visit us at our physical location:**
  
  Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce  
  Learning Resource Center, Room U007  
  University of Mississippi Medical Center  
  2500 N. State St., Jackson, MS 39216

- **Call our main number at 601-815-0650 to obtain more information about OMPW or set up an appointment.**

  OMPW office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST Monday through Friday.

- **We welcome you to:**
  
  o Suggest an event or resource to this website at info@ompw.org.

  o Reach out to any of our Staff

  **Director**  
  John R. Mitchell, MD, FAAFP  
  (601) 815-0650  
  Email: jrmitchell@umc.edu

  **Associate Director**  
  Zonzie McLaurin, MPH, BHSA, CCRP  
  (601) 815-0660  
  Email: zmclaurin@umc.edu
Information Inquiries:

- Submit general, Data or GME inquiries through our OMPW contact form.
- Access our financial assistance form.

3) What are OMPW’s priorities?

* **To advocate** for continued resources and support to address deficiencies and distribution factors in the physician workforce;

* **To work** collaboratively with the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure to build a robust and accurate data depository of all Mississippi licensed physicians;

* **To develop and maintain** a geospatial mapping tool that will allow physicians and other health-care providers to identify health professional shortage areas and locate or expand their practices to reach patients in greatest need;

* **To continue** to form collaborative partnerships and build relationships with political and health-care leaders and the public to educate and better define health-care needs and available resources;

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* **To identify** potential sites across the state to initiate and nurture new family medicine residencies;

* **To explore and evaluate** the potential for new GME training sites in other specialties of need across the state and to nurture and support their advancement;

* **To advance** graduate medical education in rural areas across the state;

* **To develop** a statewide faculty development and training process;
To create a strategic workforce research plan that will address physician workforce shortfalls and ensure adequate access to health-care services for all Mississippians;

To continue to develop the OMPW’s website with resources, news and information; and

To expand recruitment and retention initiatives to encourage physicians to enter, remain in or return to practice in Mississippi.

4) Why is addressing graduate medical education (GME) so important and how is OMPW able to assist and support GME training?

As one of the most medically underserved states in the country, Mississippi has the lowest per-capita primary care physician supply in the nation. Our state has 64.5 active physicians per 100,000 residents, compared to the national average of 91.1 physicians per 100,000 residents.

Fixing that deficit sounds simple, just crank out more doctors. Seems the national decision markers followed that logic and it has led to a state and national movement to create new U.S. medical schools and expand the class sizes of existing medical schools. However, there is a major flaw in that logic and simply producing more medical school graduates does not readily solve the practicing physician shortage problem.

All medical school graduates MUST enter into a graduate medical education program and successfully complete at minimum one year of training, if not a full residency, prior to being eligible to receive a permanent medical license. Most do choose to complete residency training before entering clinical practice which means we need more residencies to accommodate the increased medical student production to ultimately solve the practicing physician shortage.

Mississippi is no different than our neighboring states. It has a new medical school and class size at our existing medical school has been increased. However, how do we train the expanded medical school graduates when class size surpasses currently available residency slots? The simple answer again is develop more training slots. The answer is simple but the process is complex.

The statistics tell the tale. Mississippi retains more than 75% of physicians who complete both their medical school and residency training within the state. We feel that it is critical that states like Mississippi address this deficiency of GME training opportunities. Understanding the metrics and deficiencies associated with the Mississippi physician workforce has led OMPW to place a priority on the need for advancing postgraduate medical education; i.e. residency training.

The process is time-extensive, complex and costly. But, by creating and expanding NEW Mississippi GME programs, we can directly increase the number of physicians who remain in Mississippi to practice. We also know that a single physician can have a major economic impact on a community. Studies have shown that the addition of one new physician can produce a community economic impact of $1-2 million through the creation of jobs with related wages and benefits, purchase of goods and services, and large-scale support of state and local tax revenues.

Because family medicine is viewed as the cornerstone of primary care, OMPW has focused initially on family medicine residency training programs throughout the state. OMPW envisions adding five to six additional programs to the previous two family medicine programs which will bring it more in line with the availability of first year slots compared to our neighboring states. Two new family medicine programs
have been started since the 2012 legislation as well as two internal medicine programs and one emergency medicine program. Several other programs are in various stages of planning.

5) With all the changes in medical education and the emphasis on new and expanded graduate medical education, how is OMPW addressing and engaging in Graduate Medical Education faculty development?

Volunteer, part-time, and full-time medical educators are critical to the success of today’s medical education at both the undergraduate and graduate medical education levels. Three-year mandatory family medicine rotations have long been a mainstay of osteopathic medicine. This concept is now expanding to other disciplines in the allopathic training model. It is greatly appreciated that these practicing physicians give their time and effort to train medical students. Now, with advancing GME training opportunities, the need is even greater in numbers. These volunteers and nonacademic center faculty need and deserve additional training to maximize and efficiently train the ever-growing number of medical trainees.

The OMPW has partnered with the Office of Academic Affairs at the University of Mississippi Medical Center and William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine in coordinating a longitudinal development training program aimed at non-academic center physicians interested in obtaining medical educator (faculty) training. Grants will be available for the pilot study group. Future courses will require an appropriate tuition to sustain the course for future faculty trainees. A Program Director 101 course or at minimum program director specific training is also under consideration.

6) Which institutions or entities is OMPW currently in dialog with and/or engaged in ongoing evaluations?

Corporate or University Engagements and/or Discussions:

- Baptist Medical Group - (Memphis)
- Merit Health
- University of Mississippi School of Medicine - (Jackson)
- William Carey College of Osteopathic Medicine - (Hattiesburg)

Hospitals, Communities and/or Residency Programs Engagements and/or Discussions:

- Baptist Memorial Healthcare Desoto and Northeast Mississippi Healthcare Center - (Desoto and Byhalia)
- Baptist Memorial Hospital - Golden Triangle (Columbus)
- Baptist Memorial Hospital - (Oxford)
- Mississippi Delta Education Consortium - (under evaluation and development)
- Delta Regional Medical Center - (Greenville)
- Greenwood/LeFlore Hospital - (Greenwood)
- North Sunflower Medical Center - (Ruleville)
- South Sunflower County Hospital - (Indianola)
- EC-HEALTHNET Family Medicine Residency Program - (Meridian)
- Forrest General Hospital Family Medicine Residency Program - (Hattiesburg)
- Magnolia Regional Health Center Internal Medicine Residency Program - (Corinth)
- Memorial Hospital - (Gulfport)
- Merit Health Wesley Internal Medicine and Emergency Medicine Residencies - (Hattiesburg)
- Merit Health Biloxi (Biloxi) and Coastal Family Health Center - (Biloxi)
7) How does OMPW evaluate and monitor the Mississippi physician workforce?

Physician workforce planning is crucial if the state is to ensure an adequate and/or appropriate supply of well-trained and appropriately distributed physicians to meet Mississippi’s present and future healthcare needs.

The Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce (OMPW) and the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure have joined forces to create the Office of Mississippi Physician Workforce Data System (OMPWDS). Through this collaborative effort, selected components of the Mississippi Board of Medical Licensure data will also be stored in this new longitudinal database (OMPWDS) where it can be analyzed and dissected. Selected segments can then be analytically demonstrated to healthcare leaders with portions of the data made publically available as well.

The new workforce data system will enable OMPW to analyze physician demographics in a more accurate and comprehensive manner for determining current and future needs. Data analytics produced through this collaborative will empower OMPW, researchers, and healthcare leaders with the tools necessary to conduct more effective workforce planning and health services and recruitment research. By generating aggregate statistics on the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals across Mississippi some of the charts, maps and data dashboards will be published on the directly to this website. Additional questions and surveys are in the works.

8) Is OMPW involved in any physician recruitment and/or physician retention activities?

The first annual Rural Opportunities for Mississippi Physicians (ROMP) Career Fair took place Saturday, April 30, 2016 at the Jackson Hilton. This was an OMPW initiative but had strong collaborative support from multiple medical organizations and societies. A steering committee made up of the Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians, Mississippi Hospital Association, Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association, Mississippi Primary Health Care Association, Mississippi Rural Health Association, Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program, Mississippi State Medical Association, Mississippi State Department of Health-Office of Rural Health, University of Mississippi School of Medicine, and William Carey College of Osteopathic Medicine was organized and led by OMPW.

The first annual ROMP was a one-day event specifically designed for medical students, residents, and currently practicing physicians who may be interested in relocating to rural communities around Mississippi. Representatives from more than 30 Mississippi hospitals, clinics and groups showcased their organizations, communities and career opportunities.

Response was highly favorable and OMPW has begun planning for the next career fair tentatively scheduled for spring 2017.

OMPW is also aligned with 3RNet (The National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network) while there is an ongoing evaluation of other networks or means to assist in recruitment. 3Rnet is a web-based system
that helps health professionals find practice opportunities in rural and underserved areas throughout the country. For opportunities in Mississippi, please visit www.3RNet.org. Health professionals can also post their information on the site. A link and other information is located via our website’s Career Center.

9) How can I find out more about OMPW resources and apply for funding?

OMPW is tasked with addressing the physician workforce needs of Mississippi. As we discussed in question 4, one of Mississippi’s greatest opportunities lies in GME development. Mississippi faces significant current and future shortages in both primary care and several specialty areas. The development and support of strategically placed graduate medical education programs across the state can have a significant and sustainable impact upon physician shortages, maldistribution, and improved access to care for all Mississippians.

The Governor and Mississippi Legislature recognized this remarkable opportunity and has appropriated state designated funds to OMPW to accomplish this mission. The office will continue to evaluate and administer funding to help offset the cost of developing appropriately placed residency programs as outlined in HB 317 (Mississippi Legislature, 2012 Session) and Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated, Title 41, Chapter 123.

For more information regarding OMPW funding, please complete our financial assistance form. Your information is only accessible to OMPW staff. Although OMPW’s initial focus has been on family physician training, we recognize the need for all specialties and will continue to identify and develop these other areas of need and where possible assist with outside resources.

10) Finally, how can I learn more about OMPW and keep up with Medical news in Mississippi?

OMPW’s website is now live, operational, and frequently updated. It serves as an electronic entry point for residency education funding opportunities, healthcare advocacy sites, professional development resources, scholarship and loan repayment updates, practitioner and consumer links, physician workforce data, and more.

For medical news pertaining to Mississippi, visit us again often at www.ompw.org.