

## **STUDY SHOWS THAT ILLINOIS DOCTORS ARE NOT FLEEING ILLINOIS, AS SOME CLAIM**

There have been recent media publications in Chicagoland and other parts of Illinois claiming that, based on a recent study of medical students at Northwestern University School of Medicine, physicians are fleeing the state of Illinois. These claims simply are not supported by the evidence, or even the study itself.

Figures from the American Medical Association show that the number of physicians practicing medicine in Illinois has steadily increased over the last 45 years. In fact, 12 out of 13 states surrounding Illinois have a lower per capita rate of physicians than Illinois.

The study referred to was really a survey conducted by the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, entitled "The 2010 Illinois New Physician Workforce Study." This study surveyed 561 graduating Illinois medical students about issues that affect their practice decisions. Incidentally, this survey was funded by the Illinois Hospital Association and the Illinois State Medical Society Insurance Company. Recent media claims contend that the study showed that 70% of new physicians leaving Illinois did so due to fears of medical malpractice liability in Illinois. In fact, the survey results are that the two primary reasons new physicians are leaving Illinois are: 1) That the Chicago physician market is over-saturated; and 2) Students are leaving the state to return to their home state to live and practice medicine.

Unlike the Chicagoland area, which has an over-saturated physician market, rural areas of the state do have an under supply of physicians. However, in rural areas of the state, there are very few medical malpractice lawsuits. For example, according to the Illinois Jury Verdict Reporter, in Rock Island, Illinois, there have been only 4 medical malpractice jury verdicts over the past 10 years.

Is the cost of professional liability insurance a factor new physician's consider in choosing where to practice, along with any other costs of doing business? Of course; 35% of students surveyed indicated that malpractice rates had some bearing on their decision where to practice. However, that is far different than claiming that the fear of medical malpractice liability is the primary factor causing physicians to flee the State of Illinois, which never has been and is not now the case.

### **Article by Ronald F. Wittmeyer, Jr.**

***Ronald F. Wittmeyer, Jr. concentrates in plaintiff's personal injury law. He is board certified as a civil trial attorney by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. Mr. Wittmeyer is currently Secretary of the Northwest Suburban Bar Association. Further information about Mr. Wittmeyer and his law firm is available at [www.injurylawattys.com](http://www.injurylawattys.com).***

