



WISCONSIN EMERGENCY CARE IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY

DOCTOR DAY | JANUARY 30, 2018

Whether it's our quality of life, our unemployment rates, our dairy industry, the quality of our schools, or our sports teams, Wisconsin consistently prides itself on leading the nation. Shockingly, we are last in one area critical to our quality of life: compensation for Emergency Physicians through our Medicaid-related programs. Wisconsin pays far less than all of our border states; less even than West Virginia, Mississippi and New Mexico.

Wisconsin's Emergency Departments and Emergency Physicians are the front lines in the battle against heroin, opioids and other drugs overdoses; frequently the first stop for patients suffering acute mental illnesses who may be a danger to themselves and their families; and by default, often the first point of entry for thousands of patients with non-life-threatening illnesses who often have no insurance or do not understand where else they can go to see a physician.

Low Medicaid Reimbursement Leaves Safety Net Flailing

All Emergency Departments, but especially independent groups of Emergency Physicians who contract to provide care in many Wisconsin hospitals, are at risk because of our worst-in-the-nation reimbursement rates. Independent groups lack income from other hospital departments to offset the financial losses that occur every time they see a Medicaid patient. Wisconsin-based groups do not have buffers from multiple states as national staffing companies may. As such, they are struggling to recruit and retain Emergency Medicine specialists who provide the best specialized care in emergency situations.



Access to Emergency Care: A Challenge for Medicaid Patients

Specialists are typically on call for emergency departments, willing to step in to help stabilize patients. However, with reimbursement from Medicaid so much lower than other insurance companies, departments that see a high portion of Medicaid patients are having trouble getting specialists to be on call. Some patients have to travel farther or be transferred to receive specialty care, creating waste in the healthcare system.

TESTIMONY FROM THE FRONT LINES

"As the physician group providing the most emergency care to Wisconsin's Medicaid enrollees, our small business is torn every day between our ongoing passion for caring for patients in underserved communities and surviving financially so we can provide care in the future."

- Cory Wilson, MD, President
Emergency Medicine Specialists, SC

"As a hospital CEO, physician recruiting is always a top priority. Our physician Medicaid fee schedule puts us at a disadvantage in attempting to attract talented young physicians to practice in our area. This issue is made even more difficult when we are competing with neighboring states for talent."

- Andrew J. Bagnall, President & CEO
HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan



Hospitals Reeling in Competition with Neighboring States

In areas such as Chippewa Falls in northwestern Wisconsin, hospitals are having a hard time recruiting trained emergency physicians against neighboring states such as Iowa and Minnesota, where the Medicaid reimbursement for emergency services is 1.5-2 times what it is in Wisconsin. The poor reimbursement rate has large ripple effects on Wisconsinites' ability to access high quality emergency care.

SPECIALIST SPEAKS OUT

"More and more, emergency room call is something to be avoided. As specialists drop ER coverage, or drop participation in Medicaid entirely, a larger burden is placed upon those practitioners remaining in the programs."

-Tracy M, MD
Wisconsin Specialist Physician