



CLINICAL INNOVATION

Diagnostic imaging: Studies track utilization, groups work to curb costs

As hospitals, insurers, and government officials grapple with rapidly escalating imaging costs, new research presented at a November 2004 conference indicates that physicians could cut annual health care costs by millions and limit patients' exposure to radiation by adhering to the American College of Radiology's guidelines ranking the most appropriate scans for given conditions.

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On Our Watch

- Studies reveal importance of CRP levels
- Study finds gastric bypass 'viable option' for severely obese

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PATIENT SAFETY

Care quality: Bolstered by IHI campaign, hospitals implement 'rapid response teams'

Adding momentum to rapid response teams' growing presence in U.S. hospitals, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's new "100,000 Lives" campaign urges hospitals to mobilize clinician response at the first sign of patient decline, speeding care by circumventing protocols that may otherwise delay intervention.

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On Our Watch

- Cardiologists say disclosure affects decisions

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

- Hospitals missing out on growing outpatient orthopedics sector

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YEAR IN REVIEW

News and events that shaped hospitals' clinical agendas in 2004

Across 2004, the *Clinical Strategy Watch* reported on numerous developments that affected the work of hospitals' clinical leaders. In this issue, the *Watch* presents a snapshot of the top news and events that shaped clinical practice in 2004.

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RECRUITING

Physician recruiting: Cincinnati group develops website to stem physician shortage

A coalition of Cincinnati health care leaders recently launched CincinnatiMDjobs.com, a recruiting website designed to address a documented shortage of physicians in the region. The Health Improvement Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati, which brings together stakeholders in the region's health care market, created the Web-based tool after research revealed that the area had fewer physicians per capita than comparable Midwestern cities, in addition to pronounced shortages in 14 specialties.

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POLICY, RULES & REGULATIONS

- MedPAC votes to recommend moratorium extension, faces AMA opposition
- HHS permits hospital subsidy of surgeons' malpractice insurance expenses

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MEDICAL STAFF AFFAIRS


- NYC area medical malpractice costs up 147% since 1999

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INPATIENT SPECIALISTS

- Hospitals adopt eICUs to counter intensivist shortages

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loss methods, researchers in the current study sought to determine whether the benefits persist over time. For the study, researchers tracked 1,268 severely obese patients over 10 years; 641 patients underwent gastric bypass surgery, and 627 control patients were treated with conventional, nonsurgical therapies. At two years follow-up, surgery patients experienced an average 23.4% decrease in weight, while those in the nonsurgery group had an average weight increase of 0.1%. After 10 years, surgery patients maintained a 16.1% decrease in weight, while the control patients had an average 1.6% increase in weight. Researchers note that “recovery rates” for diabetes and hypertension were “more frequent in the surgery group than in the control group” at both two and 10 years follow-up and that throughout the course of the study surgery patients maintained a lower average caloric intake and higher levels of physical activity. The researchers conclude that, in comparison with conventional treatments, gastric bypass surgery “appears to be a viable option” for severely obese patients. In an accompanying editorial, two obesity experts write that surgery is the best method for “rescuing” severely obese patients and “reversing or preventing” the development of major health conditions. They note, however, that “it would be an even greater success” to eliminate the need for such procedures by intervening early in life to instill positive dietary and physical fitness habits (Sjöström et al., *NEJM*, 12/23/04; Solomon/Dluhy, *NEJM*, 12/23/04; Reuters Health/Yahoo! News, 12/22/04). 

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Research reveals aging physician pool, shortage in 14 specialties

An early 2003 study conducted by the HIC and a group of Cincinnati executives to gauge the “adequacy of the [local] health care system” showed that the city had just 206 doctors per 100,000 residents, compared with a national average of 239 and an average of 232 in similar Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana cities (Cincinnati MD Resource Center Business Plan, 11/22/04). The survey also revealed physician shortages in 14 specialties, seven of which have been undersupplied since 1995. Further clouding the long-term outlook, Cincinnati physicians were found to have an average age of 50.4, nearly two years older than their peers in similar Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana cities, raising concern that Cincinnati physicians’ impending retirements will exacerbate the situation (*Watch* interview, 12/23/04).

Hospitals slow to utilize Web for physician recruitment

Despite these shortages, HIC inquiries determined that “very few” Cincinnati hospitals and physician practices were tapping the Web’s potential to accelerate recruitment, says Lisa Adkinson, executive director of the Cincinnati MD Resource Center. With a 2004 survey of medical residents finding that residents view the Web as “the most valuable source of information” about career opportunities, Cincinnati hospitals’ lack of a Web presence threatened to put the area at a competitive disadvantage (Cincinnati MD Resource Center Business Plan, 11/22/04). For instance, when Adkinson surveyed 10 national physician job boards and one serving the region including Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and

Indiana, she found only 28 Cincinnati-area listings out of 26,213 jobs; she concluded that “there was a barrier to employers in the area using Web recruitment techniques.” Hiltz, who served on the committee that developed the site, told the *Watch* (1/4/05) that organizers felt a regional recruitment website could produce “a broader and more diverse pool from which to select.”

Diverse committee crafts Web-based recruitment strategy

To launch a Web-based recruitment effort, the HIC’s 21-member Physician Recruitment Subcommittee brought together physicians and representatives from the hospital, managed care, and business sectors. Across eight months, the group designed and built CincinnatiMDjobs.com, the centerpiece of a comprehensive recruitment and retention effort dubbed the Cincinnati MD Resource Center. To create the website, the HIC tapped an existing interface developed by the Michigan Health Council (MHC), an organization that runs physician job boards in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. The website cost approximately \$56,000 to develop, funded by grants and contributions from area businesses, insurers, providers, and health care organizations; according to Adkinson, partnering with an organization that already possessed technology enabling candidates to post their resumes and employers to post job openings was more cost-effective than developing a website from scratch.

Organizers hope candidate-employer matching, recruiting insights can stem physician shortage

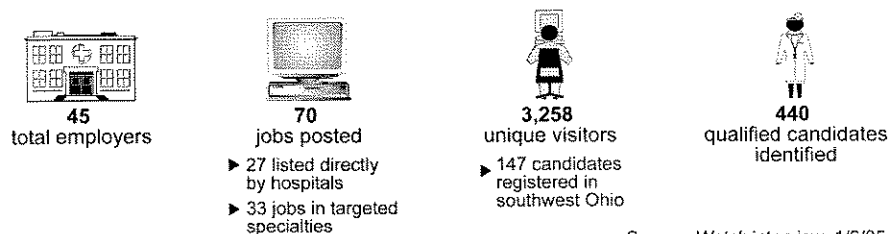
To encourage employer participation, the Resource Center—which currently employs an executive director and a project manager dedicated to minority physician recruitment and will hire an additional recruiter this year—assists employers with writing compelling job advertisements and currently offers CincinnatiMDjobs.com’s services free of charge. Adkinson notes that the site may eventually charge employers a fee to post jobs but says that it will be far lower than what head-hunting services would typically charge to recruit a physician; industry experts peg such fees as high as \$40,000 (*Watch* interview, 12/23/04; Bonfield, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 12/6/04).

The website offers employers and candidates “automated matching”; when a candidate’s specialty and geographic preference match with an employer’s job listing, the site automatically notifies each party by e-mail. Adkinson says that the system provides a near-immediate list of candidates for each opportunity. If there is mutual interest, the Resource Center will help introduce a candidate to the Cincinnati area by arranging travel and providing information about neighborhoods, schools, and job opportunities for the physician’s spouse. The relationship continues when a candidate accepts the job, Adkinson says, noting that the Resource Center considers physician retention to be one of its key goals. By staying in touch with candidates and employers, the resource center hopes to collect recruiting best practices, which the center will then disseminate to hospitals and physician practices through in-person training and Web content (*Watch* interview, 12/23/04).

Although the project is still new, four months after its launch CincinnatiMDjobs.com is “vastly exceeding projections in terms of site activity,” says HIC Executive Director Lynn Olman (*Watch* interview, 12/21/04). As of Dec. 31, the site’s 70 job postings had generated more than 46,000 site hits—up 48% from Dec. 1—and identified 440 qualified candidates.

CincinnatiMDjobs.com matches physician candidates and area employers

Candidate and employer participation as of Dec. 31, 2004



Source: *Watch* interview, 1/6/05.