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## Web site recruits doctors for area

### 31 physicians hired through it

By Tim Bonfield  
Enquirer staff writer

Dr. William Hammons won't start seeing patients in Northern Kentucky until October - but his recruitment reflects a new chapter in the ongoing debate about whether Greater Cincinnati has enough doctors.

Hammons became the first area doctor whose job search and recruitment can be traced entirely to the creation of CincinnatiMDjobs.com, a Web site launched last August specifically to address concerns about local physician shortages.

So far, 31 doctors who have been hired in the past year have used the new Web site for at least part of their job search.

But Hammons, a family practice specialist who joined the Patient First group, reflects the first example of a doctor who joined a practice after learning about the job entirely through the new Web site, says Lisa Adkinson, executive director of the Cincinnati MD Resource Center.

As of July 1, the doctor recruitment site had 92 job postings from more than 60 area physician groups.

Since the site was launched, about 11,000 users have hit the site more than 127,000 times.

Greater Cincinnati has about 4,200 doctors.

That's about 500 doctors short of the population's overall need, according to a 2003 task force study that compared the region to 10 other Midwest cities.

It also found that 14 specialties were in short supply and another five had doctors considered significantly older than average, including cardiology, asthma care, radiology and orthopedic surgery.

Experts still debate why the shortages exist and how much people living here are suffering as a result.

Many say local employers and insurers created a low-pay market for doctors as they tried for the past decade to hold down rising health costs. Some also blame the rising costs of malpractice insurance. Others say Cincinnati hasn't been as attractive to young professionals as other places.

Others have disputed whether there really is a doctor shortage.

The overall number of doctors has been growing in this area, according to state records. Few, if any, families have seen a loved one die or suffer serious harm from lack of care that could be traced to a doctor shortage.

Hammons, 32, a native of Greater Cincinnati who grew up in Madeira, says that when he finished a residency program in Tennessee nearly two years ago, a pay gap existed in Cincinnati compared to other places. But money wasn't a key issue for him. Married for 10 years and the father of a 19-month-old daughter, Hammons wanted to move back to Cincinnati for family reasons. He was willing to

#### RECRUITING DOCTORS

CincinnatiMDjobs.com was formed nearly a year ago to help address concerns about physician supply shortages.

**Total hits:** 127,705, through June.

**Total visitors:** 11,000

**Jobs posted:** 92

**Doctor groups posting jobs:** 63

**Local needs:** 19 specialties are considered in short supply or have significantly older-than-average doctors in the field: allergy and asthma care, cardiology, general surgery, radiation oncology, neurology, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, colon and rectal care, radiology, orthopedic surgery, thoracic surgery, child psychiatry, psychiatry, dermatology, gastroenterology, urology, pulmonary care, anesthesiology and pathology.

**Local successes:** 31 doctors recruited to town at least in part through the nearly year-old Web site, including three cardiologists, a psychiatrist and an anesthesiologist.

#### ADVERTISEMENT

give up some pay to be closer to home.

But two years ago, it was extremely hard to find out which local practices had openings, he said. "Physicians are more than well-compensated no matter where you go. The difference from one city to another is more about the practice itself, the time you can spend with your family and other things," Hammons said.

So far, none of the hires have been enough to remove a specialty category from the shortage list. But in some categories it would only take a few doctors to make a big difference.

In endocrinology, a key specialty for the treatment of diabetes and obesity, the area has eight specialists. Experts say the city should have 12, Adkinson said.

"That would be a 50 percent increase. But it also would be just four more doctors," she said.

While debates about the doctor supply continue, there is widespread agreement on one thing: increasing the doctor population in this region will take several years, not just a few months, to achieve.

The five-year goal of CincinnatiMDjobs.com was to help recruit 104 doctors to the region. In 2005, it hoped to attract 15. It got 31.

"This has far and away exceeded our expectations," says Lynn Olman, president of the Greater Cincinnati Hospital Council.

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