Anesthesiologist Salary Survey Shows Pessimism on Universal Healthcare

*Average Anesthesiologist Salary Holds Steady in Annual LocumTenens.com Survey*

Alpharetta, Ga. (Vocus) October 16, 2008 -- Each major-party presidential candidate has offered a plan to reform the U.S. healthcare system, but how do those in the surgical suite view the issue? Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of anesthesiologists responding to a recent anesthesiologist salary survey conducted by physician recruiting firm LocumTenens.com said universal healthcare would negatively affect their personal incomes.

Among 427 anesthesiologist salary survey respondents, 29 percent indicated the policy would have no effect on their earnings. Only 8 percent thought universal healthcare's effect on their personal incomes would be positive.

"We surveyed physicians in four specialties on compensation-related issues and, overall, 42 percent of respondents predicted that universal healthcare would negatively affect their incomes, while the same number predicted no effect," LocumTenens.com Senior Vice President Pamela McKemie said. "Our anesthesiologist respondents definitely showed the highest rate of negativity about their professional outlook under a universal healthcare scenario."

While many survey respondents were unsure how "universal healthcare" would be defined or implemented, even more anesthesiologists offered negative comments about how such a policy would likely affect their practices. For example:

- "Universal healthcare will mean Medicaid reimbursement rates. All physician incomes will decline substantially and quality of patient care will erode due to inability to maintain practice costs."
- Any single payer would dictate fees to physicians, like Medicare does currently."
- "All physicians will work harder for the same income."
- It's inevitable. Salaries will decrease, but along with this will likely be a big decrease in clinical workload and/or effort by doctors."
- "It would definitely reduce my income and thus I would go ahead and retire."

Anesthesiologist Salary Trends Identified

Forty percent of anesthesiologist salary survey respondents said their 2007 income was about the same as (27%), or less than (23%), their income in 2006. However, half (50 percent) of responding anesthesiologists reported earning more income in 2007 than in 2006, with 28 percent reporting an income increase of 2 to 9 percent and 22 percent reporting an increase of 10 percent or more.

Overall 2008 annual anesthesiologist salary averaged $336,374.70, roughly a four-percent increase over an average 2007 anesthesiologist salary of $323,183 for 2007 respondents to the LocumTenens.com survey. While 37 percent of respondents were employer-based, 38 percent had worked as a locum tenens provider and 18 percent reported working on a locum tenens or contract basis exclusively.

More than half of 2008 anesthesiologist respondents (54%) said they had no plans to change jobs. However, more than a quarter of respondents (28%) said they planned to change jobs within the next year. Higher
compensation was the top reason for making a job change, as identified by 41 percent of respondents. Twenty-four percent said the top reason was to seek a better work environment, while 17% would be seeking a better community for themselves and their families.

Most 2008 anesthesiologist respondents (73%) said they would choose medicine as a career again if given the choice.

Founded in 1995, LocumTenens.com is a full-service physician recruiting firm specializing in anesthesiology jobs, cardiology jobs, psychiatry jobs, radiology jobs, surgery jobs and CRNA jobs with U.S. hospitals, medical groups and community health centers. LocumTenens.com is part of the Jackson Healthcare family of companies.

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