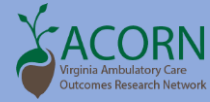# Primary care continues to serve Virginia under stress

Primary care is essential

Primary care is the only part of the U.S. health care system that results in longer lives and more equity. It is the foundation of a healthy healthcare system. The National Academy of Medicine defines high-quality primary care as *"the provision of whole-person, integrated, accessible, and equitable health care by interprofessional teams that are accountable for addressing the majority of an individual's health."*

To understand primary care capacity in Virginia, we used data from the All-Payer Claims Database and National Plan and Provider Enumeration System to identify every primary care clinician and practice in the Commonwealth. We then surveyed all practices in 2018 and again in 2022, with a 30% and 23% response rate, respectively.

Primary care in Virginia is rapidly changing

The increased demand for primary care services due to Medicaid expansion and the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant strain on primary care. Based on practice survey responses…

More of primary care practices' patients have Medicaid
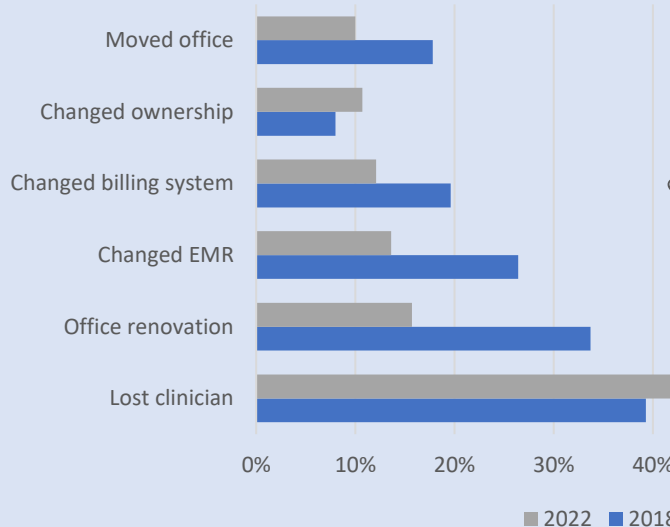**22% vs. 12%** (p<0.01) of patients in 2022 vs. 2018

More practices are owned by health systems
43% vs. 25% (p<0.01) of practices in 2022 vs. 2018

Practices report greater stress than ever before
53% vs. 34% (p<0.01) of practices in 2022 vs. 2018

Of practices that lost clinicians in 2022, why?

Reading this chart
Green indicates expected loss
Gray indicates neutral loss
Red indicates unexpected loss

Practice stresses experienced in prior year
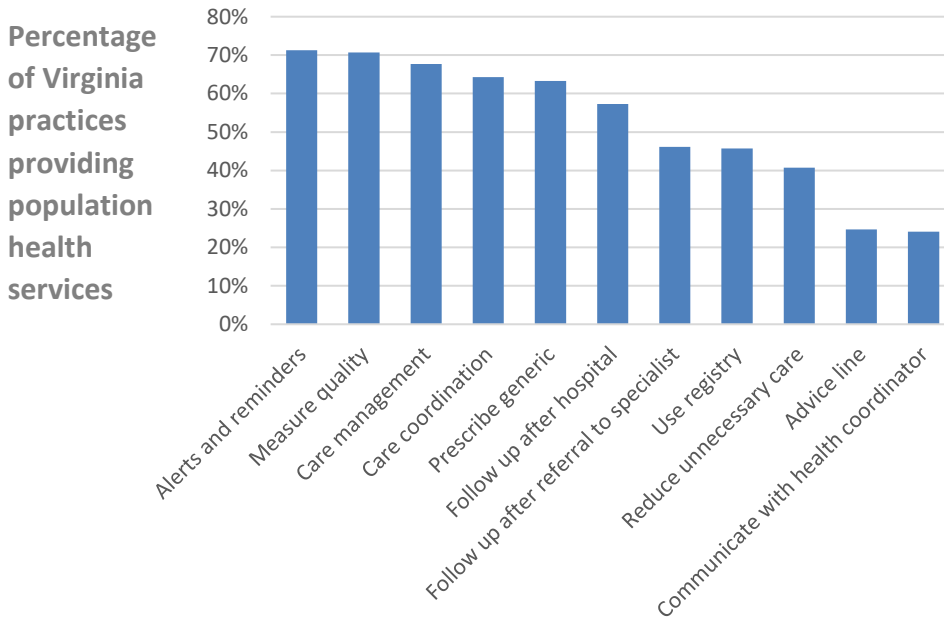

■ 2022 ■ 2018

The primary care workforce in Virginia

Virginia has 4,872 primary care clinicians and [ranks 27 out of 50 states for number of primary care clinicians per resident](#).

Primary care clinicians currently see an average of 1,368 people per year. For all residents to have a medical home, **Virginia needs 1,456 (30%) more primary care clinicians than we have today**.

Despite the increased demand for primary care services, the number of clinicians and practices remains virtually unchanged from 2018.

Percentage of Virginia practices providing population health services

Delivery of primary care in Virginia (from 2020 All-Payer Claims Data)

65% of people had at least one primary care visit

80% of care for people with diabetes occurred in primary care

66% of mental health care occurred in primary care

43% of social care delivery occurred in primary care

Types of practices in Virginia

1,933 Family/Internal Medicine

260 Pediatric

93 Obstetrics/Gynecology

98 urgent care practices

171 community health centers

Implications

High-quality primary care is essential to the health of Virginians.
- Most Virginians are seen in a primary care practice at least once per year.
- The majority of care for most medical conditions occurs in primary care.
- Primary care is responsible for the health of the most vulnerable communities.

Primary care is proactively providing needed care to people.
- The current primary care workforce is inadequate to meet the needs of all Virginia residents.
- More primary care clinicians are close to retirement than starting their careers.
- The number of practices that have a primary care clinician leave practice has nearly doubled since 2018.

The trend of recent changes in primary care practice is likely unsustainable.
- Pay more for primary care so clinicians want to be primary care clinicians.
- Train more primary care clinicians by increasing residency training slots.

For more information, please contact acorn@vcuhealth.org or (804) 828-9625.

TO VIEW ALL 2022 PRIMARY CARE BRIEFS, VISIT:
https://acorn.squarespace.com/primary-care