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Hoosier doctors unite to form the Indiana Physician Coalition

INDIANAPOLIS – An alliance of Indiana physician organizations has come together to advocate for Hoosier patients. Known as the [Indiana Physician Coalition](#), its members include many of the largest medical associations and specialty societies in the state and represent the vast majority of nearly 17,000 practicing physicians and 2,000 medical students in Indiana.

Its mission is to educate lawmakers and the public about how physician-led care protects patients from harm, increases access to quality care and helps control health care spending.

“Health care teams require leadership, just as teams do in sports,” said Roberto Darroca, MD, president of the Indiana State Medical Association, a member of the coalition. “Physicians bring to the team the highest level of training and preparation, which we use to guide other members of the team to provide the highest quality of care possible for patients.”

Why qualifications matter

A new physician, either a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), accumulates up to 16,000 clinical hours by the time they complete their training. It takes seven to 12 years of preparation for practice, including four years of medical school and three to eight years of residency and fellowship training in a medical or surgical specialty.

Still, patients are often confused by the various titles of medical professions. In an independent survey of Indiana residents, the coalition found that 1 out of every 4 Hoosiers were not confident that the provider who had seen them over the past few years was a physician, rather than an advanced practitioner.

Examples of advanced practitioners that may work alongside a physician include a nurse anesthetist (CRNA), nurse practitioner (APRN), nurse midwife, optometrist, pharmacist, physician assistant, podiatrist, or psychologist.

“Some may think they are receiving care from a physician when, in reality, they are being treated by an advanced practitioner who is not a licensed physician,” said Seung Sim, MD, immediate past president of the Indiana Society of Anesthesiologists. “Every Hoosier deserves to have physician-led care. Quality matters!”

Despite the confusion, members of the coalition made it clear that everyone working in health care has an important role to play, each according to their training.

“I work closely with APRNs every day and rely on them to help care for my patients in the emergency department,” said Lauren Stanley, MD, president of Indiana’s chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. “However, a physician-led care team model is still vital for high-quality patient care, given the skills and experience of a physician. We’re not interchangeable.”

Hoosiers trust Indiana physicians

In its statewide survey, the coalition also found that patients in Indiana prefer their health care is led by a physician. More than 3 out of 4 Hoosiers over the age of 40 feel that physicians should have primary responsibility for leading and coordinating their health care.

Other findings include:

- **83%** of Hoosiers believe physicians and nurse practitioners need to work in a coordinated manner to ensure that patients get the care they need.
- **76%** of Hoosiers believe in the event of a medical complication or emergency, a physician's education and training are necessary to ensure patient safety.
- **73%** of Hoosiers believe nurse practitioners treating patients with one or more chronic diseases should be overseen by physicians.

“At the end of the day, the quality of your health care really depends on the qualifications of the professional leading your medical team,” added Dr. Stanley. “That’s why Hoosiers want to know that the person responsible for their health care has the necessary education and training to help them make the best decisions.”

Anyone interested in learning more can visit INphysicians.org.

The health care groups that are represented in the Indiana Physician Coalition include the Indiana Academy of Dermatology, Indiana Academy of Family Physicians, Indiana Academy of Ophthalmology, Indiana Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, Indiana Chapter of the American College of Surgeons, Indiana Orthopaedic Society, Indiana Osteopathic Association, Indiana Psychiatric Society, Indiana Radiological Society, Indiana Society of Anesthesiologists and Indiana State Medical Association.

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Note: The quantitative survey was administered online in Sept. 2020 to Indiana residents at least 18 years of age. A total of 400 surveys were completed, yielding a margin of error of $\pm 5.0\%$. Data was weighted to ensure accurate representation of the voting population of Indiana.

About Indiana Physician Coalition:

Indiana Physician Coalition is a statewide alliance of medical associations and specialty societies that advocates for physician-led health care that protects patients from harm, increases access to quality care and controls health care spending. Visit us on the web at INphysicians.org and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Media Contact:

Steve Cooke, spokesperson
E-mail: scooke@ismanet.org
Phone: (317) 627-9955