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News from the American College of Surgeons Health Policy Research Institute  
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**American College of Surgeons Health Policy Research Institute Releases  
Surgery Workforce Atlas that Shows Surgeon Shortage across the U.S.**  
*Growing Shortages of Surgeons and Other Physicians Pose an Increasing Threat to Patient  
Access to Safe, High-Quality and Affordable Care*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 5, 2010) – A new interactive, web-based map from the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Health Policy Research Institute shows, county-by-county throughout the U.S., where shortages of surgeons and other physicians threaten patient access to timely, safe, high-quality and affordable care. The Surgery Workforce Atlas was released today during ACS's 96<sup>th</sup> Annual Clinical Congress in Washington. It can be found at <http://www.acshpri.org/atlas>.

"The number of surgeons needed to meet population demand for care falls short by as much as 30 percent, with general surgeons in especially short supply in small communities," said Thomas C. Ricketts, PhD, MPH, managing director of the ACS Health Policy Research Institute. "This website allows users to quickly identify the supply of surgeons in their county and compare it to all other counties in the U.S. This Atlas brings home the reality of access to surgical care and we hope it will help decision makers understand the needs some communities have for access to surgical care."

Although the growing shortage of health care workers is a national issue, its impact is uniquely local. For instance, the shortages are likely to hit areas with struggling economies or a lack of amenities that have made it difficult to attract and retain surgeons and other physicians. In fact, if counties who have lost all surgeons are unable to find replacements, the viability of their local hospitals may be jeopardized.

The new map shows the per capita levels for general surgeons, all surgical specialties combined, total physicians and primary care physicians by state and county throughout the U.S. This map also details by county and state recent workforce trends, such as percentage gains and losses in the various workforces.

While the county-level maps highlight where the surgeon supply appears to meet or fall short of “adequacy” estimates, there is no clear consensus on the recommended ratio of surgeons to population. The primary goal of the maps is help practitioners, policymakers and patients identify places of limited patient access to surgical and other health care services both now and in the future.

ACS HPRI is already working on a second version of the Atlas which will feature all of the surgical subspecialties, overlay facilities such as hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers, and offer visual displays using alternative geographic units including hospital referral regions.

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### **About the American College of Surgeons**

The American College of Surgeons is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and to improve the care of the surgical patient. The College is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients. The College has more than 77,000 members and is the largest organization of surgeons in the world. For more information, visit [www.facs.org](http://www.facs.org).

### **About the Institute**

In March 2008, the American College of Surgeons established a new Health Policy Research Institute to facilitate the scholarly assessment of the role of surgery and surgical services in the evolving health care environment. The creation of this Institute is in response to the need for high-quality and relevant data on the health care system, the economy and society as they affect surgical patients and practitioners. The Institute is based at the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at the University of North Carolina. <http://www.acshpri.org/index.html>