

Using a population-based database to explore the inter-specialty differences in physician practice incomes in Taiwan.

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Abstract

Gaining an understanding of the distribution of physician incomes between different medical specialties could assist policymakers to predict the future medical manpower supply. The purpose of this study is to examine the differences in medical specialty-specific gross practice incomes between office-based physicians in Taiwan. The primary data source for the study, which includes 7444 office-based physicians, was provided by the Taiwan Department of Health, with the dependent variable of interest to this study being the annual gross income of physician practices, whilst the independent variable is physician specialty. The study controlled for physicians' age, gender, specialty-board status, type of practice, location of clinic and urbanization level of the community in which the practice was located. Multivariate regression analyses were carried out to explore the relationship between physician specialty and gross practice income. This study finds a significant relationship between the annual gross income of physician practices and the physician's medical specialty ($P < 0.001$). Of all physicians, those specializing in rehabilitation and orthopedics had the highest gross practice incomes; conversely, obstetricians and gynecologists had the lowest gross practice incomes. The regression analyses demonstrated that after adjusting for socio-demographic and professional characteristics, gross practice incomes of physicians were significantly related to their medical specialty. This study concludes that differences in the gross practice incomes of physicians were significantly related to medical specialties. Those physicians specializing in procedure-based specialties, such as rehabilitation and orthopedics, had higher practice incomes than their counterparts in other more diagnosis-oriented specialties such as family practice and pediatrics.