

## Michigan Ranks 44th in the U.S. for Preventable Hospitalizations

### Family physicians are key to reversing worrisome trends in state healthcare

Lansing, MI – [Data released last week](#) by the United Health Foundation places the state of Michigan sixth worst in the nation regarding preventable hospitalizations.

Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services shows that in 2021, 3,280 out of every 100,000 Medicare patients were hospitalized for treatable conditions like asthma, diabetes, hypertension, COPD, dehydration, and urinary tract infection. This is slightly better than the [2020 figure](#) of 3,306, but still indicates the need for change in Michigan.

“Why does Michigan rank so low? Seeing your primary care specialist, like a family physician, leads to better health outcomes, yet there are still too many people without a primary care physician as their regular source of care,” said Beena Nagappala, MD, MPH, FAAFP, president of Michigan Academy of Family Physicians. “Alarming data show that 20 percent of adults and eight percent of children in our state do not visit a primary care physician for routine care like well-child appointments, annual exams, and immunizations. This means too many healthcare needs are unnecessarily being handled by urgent care centers and hospital emergency rooms.

Robert Jackson, MD, FAAFP, a board-certified family physician with Western Wayne Physicians - Allen Park

underscores this point. “In our nation, health care costs are a challenge,” Dr. Jackson said. “Making sure our system is well aligned to benefit patients so preventable hospitalizations become far less prevalent helps reduce those costs and keep people safe. For us, in this moment, alignment means making sure primary care physicians are the quarterbacks of the health care team and involved in treating conditions that too often bring people to the hospital.”

The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates there will be a shortage of up to 48,000 primary care physicians in the United States by 2034. In Michigan, we are at a minimum 862 primary care physicians short, according to Robert Graham Center reports.

Two ways this shortage can be addressed at the state level is expansion of the MIDOCs resident physician program and the Michigan State Loan Repayment Program. MIDOCs aims to expand graduate medical education residency positions in primary care specialties while recruiting and retaining physicians in underserved areas of Michigan. More state funding could increase the number of resident physicians being trained to help recruit physicians to primary care specialties and retain them in Michigan. The Michigan State Loan Repayment Program assists employers in recruiting and retaining primary care physicians in underserved communities, by providing medical education loan repayment assistance in exchange for practicing in areas with a health professional shortage.

“As the primary care physician shortage worsens, sustained state funding coupled with more investment in MIDOCs and the Michigan State Loan Repayment Program will go a long way in boosting the availability of primary care in our state,” said Dr. Nagappala. “As we anticipate Governor Whitmer’s Fiscal Year 2025 executive budget, we are seeking essential investments in primary care before the physician shortage worsens and primary and preventive care becomes harder to access.”

On Jan. 26, MAFP President Beena Nagappala, MD, MPH was interviewed on the WJR News Talk program to discuss avoidable hospitalizations. Listen to the interview [here](#).