

## Health Workforce Projections: Chiropractors and Podiatrists

### KEY FINDINGS

Between 2012 and 2025:

- Supply is estimated to grow by 30 percent for chiropractors and 36 percent for podiatrists.
- Demand is estimated to grow by 16 percent for chiropractors and 22 percent for podiatrists.
- The projected supply of individuals in each occupation exceeds the projected growth in service demand for chiropractors and podiatrists.

This fact sheet presents the national supply of and demand for chiropractors and podiatrists for 2012 through 2025 using HRSA's Health Workforce Simulation Model (HWSM).<sup>1</sup> While the nuances of modeling supply and demand differ for individual health professions, the basic framework remains the same. The HWSM assumes that demand equals supply in the base year. For supply modeling, the major components (beyond common labor-market factors such as unemployment) include characteristics of the existing workforce in a given occupation, new entrants to the workforce (e.g., newly trained workers), and workforce decisions (e.g., retirement and hours worked patterns). For demand modeling, the major components include population demographics, health care use patterns (including the influence of the Affordable Care Act health care coverage), and demand for health care providers (translated into Full-Time Equivalents). Over the period studied, the model assumes that current national patterns of labor supply and service demand remain unchanged within each demographic group.<sup>2</sup> These projections do not account for the geographical distribution of providers which may impact access to care in certain communities.

### BACKGROUND

Chiropractors care for patients with health problems in their neuromusculoskeletal system using spinal adjustments, manipulation, manual therapy, and other techniques. Chiropractors are required to have a Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.) degree, a post-graduate degree that typically takes 4 years to complete. In 2012, there were 15 Doctor of Chiropractic programs accredited by The Council on Chiropractic Education. Following graduation, some chiropractors complete postgraduate programs in specialty areas, such as orthopedics and pediatrics that lead to certification. Although specific requirements vary by state, all states require chiropractors to be licensed.

Podiatrists provide medical and surgical care for people with foot, ankle, and lower leg problems. They diagnose illnesses, treat injuries, and perform surgery involving the lower extremities. Some podiatrists specialize in performing advanced surgeries, such as foot and ankle reconstruction. Others choose specialties such as sports medicine or pediatrics. Podiatrists must have a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine

<sup>1</sup> This model uses a micro-simulation approach where supply is projected based on the simulation of career choices of individual health workers. Demand for health care services is simulated for a representative sample of the current and future U.S. population based on each person's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, health-related behavior, and health risk factors that affect their health care utilization patterns. For more information on data and methods, please see [BHW HRSA Health Workforce Supply and Demand Simulation Model](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ono T, Lafortune G, Schoenstein M. "Health workforce planning in OECD countries: a review of 26 projection models from 18 countries." *OECD Health Working Papers, No. 62*. France: OECD Publishing; 2013:8-11.

(DPM) degree from an accredited college of podiatric medicine. A DPM degree program takes 4 years to complete. In 2012, there were nine colleges of podiatric medicine accredited by the Council on Podiatric Medical Education. After earning a DPM, podiatrists must complete a podiatric medical and surgical residency (PMSR) program. Podiatrists in every state must also be licensed.

## FINDINGS

Between 2012 and 2025, supply is estimated to grow by 30 percent for chiropractors and 36 percent for podiatrists (Exhibit 1). The demand for chiropractors is projected to grow by 16 percent and demand for podiatrists is projected to grow by 22 percent. Thus, the projected growth in supply exceeds the projected growth in demand for services for both chiropractors and podiatrists. These projections suggest that the U.S. should have a sufficient supply of chiropractors and podiatrists to meet the projected growth in demand for services by 2025.

Exhibit 1. Estimated Supply and Demand for Chiropractors and Podiatrists in the U.S., 2012 – 2025

	<b>Chiropractors</b>	<b>Podiatrists</b>
<b><i>Supply</i></b>		
Estimated supply, 2012	58,800	10,700
Total supply growth, 2012-2025:	17,500 (30%)	3,900 (36%)
New entrants	33,810	6,980
Changing work patterns (e.g., part time to full time hours)	(480)	250
Attrition (e.g., retirements, mortality)	(15,830)	(3,330)
Projected supply, 2025	76,300	14,600
<b><i>Demand</i></b>		
Estimated demand, 2012	58,800	10,700
Total demand growth, 2012-2025:	9,400 (16%)	2,400(22%)
Changing demographics impact	7,300	1,800
ACA insurance coverage impact	2,100	600
Projected demand, 2025	68,200	13,100
<b>Adequacy of supply, 2025</b>		
Projected supply (minus) projected demand	8,100	1,500

Projections from the HWSM account for the aging of the population and increased number of Americans with health insurance as a result of the Affordable Care Act implementation. The aging of the large baby-boom generation will likely lead to new opportunities for chiropractors, as most insurance plans now cover chiropractic services. Also due to population aging and growing rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity, the number of people expected to have mobility and foot-related problems will rise. These factors together with projected growth in services provided in outpatient surgery settings will create new future opportunities for podiatrists.

### [About the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis](#)

The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis informs public and private-sector decision-making related to the health workforce by expanding and improving health workforce data, disseminating workforce data to the public, improving and updating projections of the supply and demand for health workers. For more information about the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis please visit our website at [bhw.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/](http://bhw.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/).