

# Medical Staff, Nursing Staff, and Patient Rights in a Post-COVID Apocalyptic World

---

UT LAW 34<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HEALTH LAW CONFERENCE  
HOUSTON, TX  
APRIL 6, 2023

DOUG WOLFORD, HOLLAND & KNIGHT, NASHVILLE, TN  
HILARY H. YOUNG, JOY & YOUNG, L.L.P., AUSTIN, TX

1

## Medical & Nursing Staff Shortages and Burnout

---

### **Current Medical Staff Shortages**

- HRSA indicates a current shortage that is particularly acute for primary care and psychiatry, including a shortage of 8,200 psychiatrist in 6,062 HPSAs
- The AAMC states that over 150 million Americans lived in federally designated mental health shortage areas

### **Future Medical Staff Shortages – Even Worse**

- The American Medical Association (AMA) and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) are both predicting a crisis in physician staffing in the near future

2

## A larger and more frail patient population on its way...

---

The population of the U.S. is expected to increase by 10% in the next decade

The entirety of the baby boom generation will be Medicare-eligible and over 65, thus U.S. will also have a lot more people needing more intensive medical care

With respect to younger Americans, the number with mental and emotional health-related issues is also rising



3

## ... To be Treated With Less Physicians

---

- The physician population will also be older, with many of the same baby boomer generation of docs entering retirement
- The supply of medical students and residents has not kept pace and its neither fast nor easy to turn on a physician supply spigot without sacrificing quality
- Younger physicians also appear to be demanding more work-life balance, so they may be working less than prior generations of physicians

4

## ... To be Treated With Less Physicians (continued)

---

By 2034, the AAMC projects a supply and demand shortage of up to 135,000 for both primary and non-primary care.

With respect to the psychiatry, within a few years, the country will be short between 14,280 and 31,109 psychiatrists

Also raising alarm, in 2023, more than 550 emergency medicine residency positions went unfilled, more than double the year prior

Of the front-line hospital physicians who are still out there, many are burned out and suffering from the pandemic war zone of the past 3 years

## ....And Less Nurses

---

Many of the same demographic pressures reflected in the current and looming physician shortage crisis are present with nursing and other hospital front-line staff as well, but the impact of the pandemic was likely much stronger on RNs

Experts found that the total supply of RNs decreased by more than 100,000 between 2020 and 2021, as many nurses retired or moved into outpatient settings or other jobs

Many hospitals struggled to provide nurse staffing at the same staffing ratios prior to the pandemic and are only slowly starting to return to prior staffing levels

Find the full text of this and thousands of other resources from leading experts in dozens of legal practice areas in the [UT Law CLE eLibrary \(utcle.org/elibrary\)](https://utcle.org/elibrary)

## Title search: Medical Staff, Nursing Staff, and Patient Rights in a Post-COVID Apocalyptic World

Also available as part of the eCourse

[2023 Health Law eConference](#)

First appeared as part of the conference materials for the  
34<sup>th</sup> Annual Health Law Conference session

"Medical Staff, Nursing Staff, and Patient Rights in a Post-COVID Apocalyptic World"