

Where Have All The Doctors Gone?

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STUART, FLORIDA, MARTIN COUNTY, August 19, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- America faces a significant physician shortage by 2025, according to a report released by the Association of American Medical Colleges - so much so that the U.S. could be short between 46,000-90,000 physicians by that time.

Even today, we are short about 16,000 [primary care doctors](#) — the very doctors



(family practitioners, internists and pediatricians) who offer the treatments and preventive screenings that save lives and head off expensive emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Wonder why things have changed so much? Well, it starts with huge medical school debts and ends with a doctor who is often overworked and underpaid. While students may enter medical school wanting to practice [primary care medicine](#), they graduate saddled with heavy debt - \$250,000 is not unusual – making them switch to a more lucrative specialty. The starting salary for a primary care physician is \$150,000 to \$170,000; a radiologist or gastroenterologist can make 2-3 times that.

Only one in five graduating internal medicine residents plans to go into primary care medicine, the Journal of the American Medical Association reports.

One heralded approach to dealing with the looming shortage is by reshaping traditional primary care: instead of a stream of patients waiting for one doctor, we will continue to move to a more efficient “team practice” in which patients with routine problems are seen by Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners and/or Physician Assistants. These so-called “mid-level providers” are trained specialists with master's degrees. The team frees up the doctor to spend more time with patients having more complex medical problems.

In medical practices like [Treasure Coast Urgent & Family Care](#) and Treasure Coast Primary Care, these professionals are already a key part of the team. So-called “scope-of-practice” laws in many states give them the ability to perform many acute medical services and procedures as well as ongoing care for chronic diseases. In Florida, many Nurse Practitioners are going back to school to get their DNP or Doctorate of Nurse Practitioner degree. This does not make them medical doctors nor do they have the same level of training. However, Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants are fully qualified to handle most of the medical care seen in a doctor's office.

It's the best of both worlds – highly-competent professionals are helping you get the diagnosis and

treatment you need in a timely fashion, but your physician is intimately involved with your overall course of care.

More than ever, every staff member and medical professional in a practice is part of an overall team that should be serving you in the most efficient way. We are Treasure Coast Urgent & Family Care and Treasure Coast Primary Care are here to offer you that caring service.

Michele Libman, M.D. is board certified in both Internal Medicine and Emergency Medicine. Her practices, Treasure Coast Urgent & Family Care and Treasure Coast Primary Care have offices in Stuart and Port St. Lucie. Visit <http://www.tcurgentcare.com>.

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