

Physician Unionization


A Dialogue

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Current Status

- 7.9% of physicians are in a union,
- similar to the general workforce.



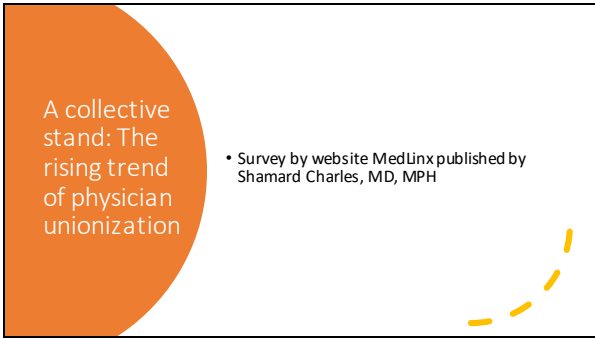
The Future?

- Healthcare unions are gaining steam across the country, as evidenced by the 2023 Kaiser Permanente strike—billed the largest healthcare worker strike in US history. While nurses are leading the way in organizing efforts, doctors and residents are also joining labor movements, demanding better pay, benefits, and working conditions.

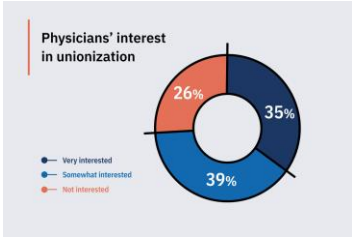


A collective stand: The rising trend of physician unionization

- Survey by website MedLinx published by Shamard Charles, MD, MPH

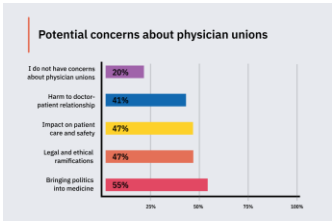


Level of Interest



Level of Interest	Percentage
Very interested	35%
Somewhat interested	39%
Not interested	26%

Physician concerns



Concern	Percentage
I do not have concerns about physician unions	20%
Harm to doctor-patient relationship	43%
Impact on patient care and safety	47%
Legal and ethical ramifications	47%
Bringing politics into medicine	55%

Why Not?

Reason	Percentage
I fear retribution from my employer	8%
The union committee doesn't reflect my views on the workplace	5%
I don't have the time	10%
I have ethical and moral concerns	12%
My place of employment doesn't have a union	75%

Top Priorities

Priority	Percentage
Career ladder	20%
Prof. development/Career advancement opportunities	31%
Flexible work environment	47%
Facilitate grievances and complaints	53%
Better non-cash benefits	63%
Higher wages	63%
Alleviate burnout	76%

What we heard from HCPs: Detriments of joining a union

- "They are too political and increase the cost of doing business."
- "They create unnecessary hassle."
- "They decrease the drive to be productive."
- "We are professionals, not blue-collar workers. I think unions would further cheapen the profession in the eyes of the public."
- "I don't believe there is a place for unions in medicine, or any occupation that is necessary for the well-being of the general population."

What we heard from HCPs: Benefits of unions

- "It is good to have open communication with management, and unions are often the only way to accomplish this."
- "Although relatively well paid, we have excessive liability work hours, and stress, and very little power alone to change the steep increase in volume and complexity we face."
- "It's way past time. I think physicians missed the opportunity to unionize a long time ago and have felt disappointed negotiating against large entities in insurance companies, hospital systems, academic institutions, and etc."
- "There's a louder voice in numbers." "Physicians have lost power in making clinical decisions."
- "It would give physicians a voice in contract and pay negotiations."
- "Without unionization, the physician shortage will only get worse until healthcare collapses, because doctors are sick of being overworked, underpaid, and under-respected."

What we heard from HCPs: How unions can mitigate the effects of the corporatization of healthcare

- "Unions give physicians some protection against hospitals."
- "As long as Medicare and insurance cuts fees every year, doctors need a way to improve reimbursement/pay."
- "Unions can prohibit hospitals and private equity from owning physicians or physician groups this is not permitted in the legal profession and should not be permitted in the medical profession."
- "Physicians have actually no say as to why they cannot organize when the insurance companies are making the changes to coverage to their patients, which directly affects the physicians."

What we heard from HCPs: Is it ethical for physicians to participate in a strike?

- Given the current status of corporate medical care in the US, it is both necessary and unethical not to care for patients—it is a dilemma."
- "Only in extreme circumstances, like if the workplace administration is hostile or inconsiderate of physicians."
- "We would be striking for less selfish reasons than most. We would fight for our patients and better conditions for all of our coworkers in healthcare, as well as ourselves."
- "No; patient well-being should be the highest priority."
- "Physicians, like with any other profession or job, can be mistreated and abused, and therefore have every right to fight for the same rights that all other humans have."
- "No, we took an oath to provide medical care and to first do no harm. Striking and leaving patients who are in need of urgent medical care is a moral issue."
- if we need to, so they can finally appreciate what we do."

Should we strike?

- Given the current status of corporate medical care in the US, it is both necessary and unethical not to care for patients—it is a dilemma.
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- "Yes, if we need to, so they can finally appreciate what we do."

Dialogue



Sources

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