

To the Editor: In Response to “A Eulogy for the Primary Care Physician”

Leah Parker, DO

In “A Eulogy for the Primary Care Physician,” the authors convey that primary care is a dying profession.¹ Current primary care physicians (PCPs) and trends in health care tell a different narrative—one where PCPs are satisfied in their careers and continue to serve as the foundation of the health care system. The future of the PCP depends on medical students and residents choosing a career in primary care and is influenced by the narrative we spread.

The authors state that a career in primary care promises “pain, burnout, financial strain, and disrespect.”¹ The burnout rate of PCPs is comparable to other physician specialties. In a 2024 survey, 46.4% of family physicians reported at least one symptom of burnout, compared to 52.2% of emergency physicians and 45.8% of obstetricians and gynecologists.² The same study shows that family medicine physicians have one of the highest rates of job satisfaction in medicine, at 76.8%.² In response to the sentiment that PCPs are burdened with financial strain, in a 2024 report, family medicine physician compensation had the second largest increase compared to all specialties, with an average full-time family physician earning over \$300,000.³ Finally, the authors predict that PCPs will be replaced by advanced practitioners. On the contrary, an increasing number of advanced practice providers are choosing to go into medical subspecialties, which is contributing to shortages in primary care.⁴ Primary care physicians are in higher demand than ever, as there is projected to be a shortage of over 87,000 primary care physicians within the next 12 years.⁵

Primary care physicians have job fulfillment, are in demand, and continue to serve as the foundation of the American health care system. Challenges exist in all physician specialties, and many of these challenges are not exclusive to primary care. Primary care physicians are valuable, and their worth should be recognized and celebrated within all subspecialties

and at all levels of medical training. Medical students and residents should not be dissuaded from pursuing primary care with a false narrative of inevitable burnout, low reimbursement, and poor job prospects. If we continue spreading the narrative that primary care is a dying profession, we will see the last primary care physician—but it will be our own doing.

References

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Leah Parker, DO, is a PGY-3 Resident Physician, Department of Family Medicine, OhioHealth Dublin Methodist Hospital, Dublin, Ohio, USA.

Corresponding author: Leah Parker, DO, OhioHealth Dublin Methodist Hospital, Dublin, Ohio, USA, leah.parker2@ohiohealth.com