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Critical reception for study claiming malpractice laws chase docs from Illinois

Half of all graduating medical residents or fellows trained in Illinois are leaving the state to practice elsewhere, according to a new study, which seems to indicate that as many as 50% of the state's medical school graduates are turned off by the "toxic" malpractice environment. Critics, however, say the study is just another attempt by the health care industry to blame its problems on malpractice claims.

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The study, which was funded by the Illinois Hospital Association and the Illinois State Medical Society, asked 561 medical students where they intended to practice after graduation and why. Students who said they planned to leave Illinois cited salary, opportunities to work in their specialty and proximity to family as the most important factors driving their decision. The survey also found that for nearly 70 percent of these students, their perception of Illinois' liability environment -- based on the state's high medical malpractice insurance premiums compared to its neighbors, as well as the Illinois Supreme Court's recent decision to remove caps on damages for medical lawsuits -- also played a role.

But are malpractice claims really driving new physicians from Illinois?. Patrick Salvi, a Chicago-based malpractice attorney, doesn't think so. "There could be many reasons to explain an impending physician shortage in Illinois, including a general population shift, so it's utterly wrong to say it's solely because of medical malpractice claims," Salvi says. "The fact is that medical negligence litigation comprises a very small fraction of costs within the health care industry, and those costs would not have been accrued if a physician had not made a terrible mistake that led to the injury or death of a patient."

Salvi also points to a report by the American Association for Justice which, using data from the American Medical Association, showed that the number of physicians per 100,000 residents was 21 percent higher in states without caps on medical liability damages than in states with caps.

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You can view or download a PDF of the complete Northwestern Report [here](#).

Go [here](#) for more on the critique of the Northwestern report's conclusions.

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