

## **Organization Representing Physicians Tackles Pay Issues**

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WASHINGTON, DC—Many federal physicians do not feel they are adequately paid, but also may not be aware of the pay policies of their respective agencies, a survey conducted by the Federal Physicians Association (FPA) found. The FPA, an organization representing federal physicians, conducted an online survey over a two-year period to find out about the experiences of federally employed physicians. More than 900 federal physicians participated.

The survey found that 83% of participants were satisfied, mostly satisfied, or very satisfied with their jobs. However, 54% of participating physicians have considered leaving federal service before becoming eligible for retirement.

When it comes to pay issues, inadequate pay was cited as the top problem facing physicians. Almost 62% of respondents either had never seen their agency's physician pay policy or didn't know if their agency had a policy. When respondents were asked the amount of total maximum annual pay, including special pay, a physician could receive, almost 60% of survey respondents indicated that the maximum pay was less than \$176,001. In fact, according to the FPA, agencies with Title 38 pay systems are authorized to pay up to \$400,000 a year.

Survey participants were mostly from HHS, Army, BOP, and the Department of State and most were civil service appointees paid under either the Physicians Comparability Allowance (PCA); Physician Special Pay (PSP); or Title 38, the Department of Veterans Affairs pay system.

The survey findings were published in the May 2010 issue of FPA's newsletter, *Federal Physician*.

### **Representing Physicians**

FPA manager Dennis Boyd said that the association is interested in helping federal physicians navigate pay issues. "It is the only organization whose single concern is pay and benefits for federal physicians." Formed in 1979 as a nonprofit professional association, the FPA successfully lobbied Congress to increase the PCA, money that an agency may pay physicians for whom the agency has recruitment and retention problems. The FPA currently has 250 members and would like to grow its membership and clout. The group is planning to elect new board members and a president who will shape their agenda.

For example, the FPA would like to get the law changed to mandate the Office of Personnel Management to expand its annual PCA report to provide additional information on Title 38 pay and other types of pay that civilian federal physicians are entitled to receive.

FPA is also interested in how conversion of DoD civilian physicians and dentists to a modified GS system incorporating Title 38 pay would affect their compensation. Boyd said that the FPA is seeking to obtain information about how that system would determine physician pay, such as what parts of Title 38 would actually be modified. An important FPA goal is finding out which surveys are being used to calculate market pay for a physician in a particular geographic region, which is one of the elements of Title 38 pay. "We would like to know which physician pay surveys are being used by VA and FDA now, and which ones will be used by DoD when it implements Title 38."

Boyd said that physicians interested in becoming FPA members can find out more information on the organization and the issues it is interested in at [www.fedphy.com](http://www.fedphy.com). Members can also access current pay policies by agency on the website.