

Region must recruit more doctors, study concludes

By PAUL KIRBY
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A STUDY by a New Paltz research group has found the Hudson Valley needs to do more to recruit physicians.

The study, conducted by the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach at SUNY New Paltz, says many more doctors will be needed if health care reform legislation is approved by Congress and more people get health insurance as a result.

"As we write, the particular outcomes of the massive national push for health care reform are still not settled," said the study's author, Kathryn Reed, who is executive director of the Catskill-Hudson Area Health Education. "... Any extension of insurance coverage to many or all of the region's people who are now uninsured will almost certainly increase

their demand for both primary and specialized care."

The researcher found physicians are in short supply now and predicted the situation probably will get worse.

"By 2020, it is projected that 23,000 physicians annually will retire or die, while U.S. medical schools graduated only about 18,000 students each year," Reed said in a press release. "Consequently, in our region, the barrel is likely to empty faster than we can fill it."

Reed said the economics of practicing medicine in the Hudson Valley presents a disparity in the cost of malpractice insurance.

"One Newburgh-area doctor put it succinctly," Reed said. "Five miles away, across the bridge in Beacon, they pay 40 percent less in malpractice premiums and get higher reimbursements."