



**Why some Doctors Prefer to Serve in Rural Areas? Examining
Factors Affecting Doctor Retention in Rural Areas of India.
Krishna D. RAO; Neha KUMRA; Aarushi BHATNAGAR; T SUNDARARAMAN;
Garima GUPTA; Kamlesh JAIN**

kd.rao@phfi.org

Public Health Foundation of India, New Delhi.; Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health;
National Health Systems Resource Center, New Delhi; State Health Resource Center, Chhattisgarh.

India faces an acute shortage of qualified physicians in rural areas. Physician scarcity has resulted in many rural Indians seeking care from unqualified providers. Considerable effort has been made by the government to place qualified physicians at rural primary health centers. Unfortunately, high levels of vacancies due to appointed physicians not taking up posts, staying at posts for a short time and absenteeism have compromised this effort. However, a sizeable number of qualified physicians continue to serve in rural areas for extended durations and they offer important insight about what factors and incentives can increase physician retention in rural areas. This paper presents results from a study conducted in the state of Chhattisgarh in central India where one hundred and twenty physicians at primary health centers were surveyed in 2009 to understand the factors behind their decision to serve in rural areas. 46% of the surveyed physicians indicated that they would stay in the same post for at least the next two years. Factors significantly associated with the decision to stay includes short commuting time to the health center, family living with physician, amount of time spent with family and the physician being 'native' to the area health center is located. Interestingly, satisfaction with salary, respect from the community and satisfaction with job was not significantly different between those who intended to stay on and those who did not. These factors suggest important policy initiatives to retain doctors in rural areas, particularly, providing good accommodation near the health facility and posting physicians in areas they are 'native' to.