

## **Medicare's role in the supply of primary care physicians**

**ISSUE:** This session will continue the Commission's examination of Medicare's role in the future supply of primary care physicians.

**KEY POINTS:** High-quality primary care is essential for creating a coordinated health care delivery system. Although beneficiaries generally have adequate access to clinician services, the Commission has expressed concern about the future pipeline of primary care physicians. Most internal medicine residents enter subspecialties instead of practicing general internal medicine, which could be related to significant disparities in compensation between primary care physicians and other specialties. In addition to income expectations, non-financial factors—such as personality fit, lifestyle preferences, and student characteristics—also influence specialty choices by medical school graduates and residents. Educational debt may also play a role. A growing share of medical school graduates plan to participate in loan-forgiveness programs, some of which are run by the Health Resources and Services Administration. These programs may serve as a model for a Medicare-financed loan repayment program for physicians who commit to providing primary care to Medicare beneficiaries.

**ACTION:** Commissioners will discuss the role of Medicare in supporting an adequate supply of primary care physicians in the future.