

Who's the happiest?

Flexibility, predictable schedules and immediate impact influence these satisfied specialties

What specialty has the most satisfied physicians? Dermatologists take the cake, with radiologists and oncologists following.

Medscape's Physician Compensation Report 2011 determined the overall satisfaction level of 22 specialties. Overall satisfaction was ranked by averaging responses to questions about compensation and career and specialty choice.

Dermatologists ranked highest in every question, coming in with an 80 percent overall satisfaction rate.

"Flexibility and predictability are two reasons dermatologists enjoy higher levels of job satisfaction," says Amy Derick, M.D., owner of Derick Dermatology, LLC. "Dermatologists can sub-specialize or do it all: pathology, surgery, cosmetics, pediatrics, adult patients, etc. Dermatologists can work routine daytime hours (full time or part time) and thus have predictable family time in the evenings not typically interrupted by emergencies."

Radiologists came in second as a group in overall satisfaction (72 percent).



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John A. Patti, M.D., FACR, radiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital and chairman of the American College of Radiology Board of Chancellors, has been practicing for 36 years.

He's not surprised that his specialty ranked so high among physician satisfaction.

"You're at the center of everything," he says. "There's very little diagnosis that occurs today without the use of imaging. That makes you able to interact with a wide range

The happiness factor

The specialties below are ranked from most to least satisfied.

Specialty	Overall satisfaction	Yes I am fairly compensated	Yes, I would choose medicine again as a career	Yes, I would choose the same specialty	Median annual salary
Dermatologists	80%	71%	76%	93%	\$290,000
Radiologists	72%	69%	66%	82%	\$350,000
Oncologists	70%	55%	76%	79%	\$285,000
Gastroenterologists	69%	52%	76%	80%	\$300,000
Ophthalmologists	67%	55%	66%	79%	\$248,500
Infectious disease/HIV	66%	54%	70%	73%	\$174,750
Plastic surgeons	66%	53%	62%	82%	\$270,000
Anesthesiologists	65%	63%	61%	70%	\$325,000
Orthopaedic surgeons	65%	47%	66%	83%	\$350,000
Psychiatrists	65%	58%	71%	67%	\$175,000
Rheumatologists	65%	53%	75%	66%	\$173,000
Emergency medicine	63%	65%	67%	56%	\$250,000
Urologists	63%	47%	65%	78%	\$305,000
Cardiologists	62%	46%	66%	75%	\$325,000
Pediatricians	62%	51%	74%	61%	\$148,000
Diabetes /endocrinologists	61%	45%	69%	68%	\$165,150
Neurologists	60%	49%	68%	63%	\$200,000
General surgeons	58%	44%	69%	60%	\$300,000
Nephrologists	57%	45%	72%	55%	\$230,000
Obstetricians/gynecologists	57%	50%	69%	53%	\$225,000
Pulmonologists	57%	45%	73%	52%	\$240,000
Primary care (IM and FP)	54%	48%	70%	43%	\$159,000

Source: Medscape Physician Compensation Report 2011, which included responses from 15,794 U.S. physicians in 22 specialty areas

of physicians and a wide range of patients."

Radiologists tied with orthopaedic surgeons for the highest median annual income in the report (\$350,000), which might add to the group's happiness quotient. But dermatologists came in at \$290,000—eighth on the list of specialties surveyed. So what makes them truly happy?

"My favorite part about the specialty of dermatology is that it is action-oriented," Derick says. "When a patient comes in with

a problem, I can often do something about it that day. If there is a suspicious lesion, I can take a biopsy to get a firm diagnosis. If a patient has a wart, I freeze it; if she has broken blood vessels, I can zap them with my laser and they disappear. I like the instant gratification that comes with seeing a problem, diagnosing it and treating it immediately." ☺

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