

What Is Your Hospital's Outmigration Report Trying to Tell You?

Turning Annual Data Into Strategic Opportunity



THE OPPORTUNITY IN YOUR DATA

Every year, hospitals receive valuable market intelligence that often gets reviewed briefly and filed away. Yet one of the most powerful planning tools available may already be sitting on your desk.

Patient outmigration reports don't simply show where residents receive care outside your community, they reveal opportunities to strengthen local services, improve patient access, support physician recruitment, and guide strategic investments.

"The first question shouldn't be, 'How do we market those services?' It should be, 'Why are our patients leaving?'"

WHAT THE DATA CAN REVEAL

When patients leave your service area, you should ask:

- Are patients unaware services are available locally?
- Are appointment wait times too long?
- Do patients perceive another hospital offers more specialized care?
- Does the data reveal a genuine gap in services?

*A 2025 study in JAMA Network Open found that **nearly 2 out of 3** rural patients received care somewhere other than their nearest rural hospital.*

LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Which one or two service lines represent our greatest opportunity for local growth?
- What factors may be influencing patients to seek care elsewhere?
- How can leadership, clinical teams, and marketing work together to strengthen awareness of services we already provide?

TURNING DATA INTO DECISIONS

Hospitals seeing the greatest value from outmigration reports often take these steps:

1 Review Trends During Strategic Planning

Outmigration data is most powerful when reviewed during annual strategic planning, not just budget season.

2 Focus on One or Two Service Lines

Addressing every category at once dilutes impact. Identify the highest-opportunity service lines and start there.

3 Ask Why Before Deciding How to Respond

Understanding the root cause; awareness, access, scheduling, physician availability, or perception — shapes the right response.

4 Align Leadership, Clinical & Marketing Teams

The strongest outcomes happen when operational insight, financial planning, and community outreach work together.

5 Measure Progress Over Time

Celebrate incremental improvements in patient retention and community awareness. Progress builds momentum.

Marketing becomes most effective after leadership identifies the opportunity.

The Outmigration Report is more than a collection of numbers. It's a strategic planning tool that helps leadership identify growth opportunities, strengthen local access to care, and make more informed decisions about future investments.

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