



# HEALTH CARE

Reporter  
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CONNECTING THE DOTS

## Most doctors join big groups

### ECONOMICS MAKING SMALL PRACTICES IMPRACTICAL

The share of local doctors who work for big medical groups has risen dramatically from a decade ago.

A total of 3,378 doctors – 52 percent of physicians in the four-county Sacramento metropolitan area – work exclusively for Sutter Health, Dignity Health, Kaiser Permanente or the UC Davis Health System, according to Business Journal research. That's up from 2,044 in 2004, when it was 39 percent of the total.

The trend away from solo or small group practice is expected to increase as time goes on. "This was predictable years ago," said Karen Taranto, a medical-group consultant in Sacramento. In part, she said, "It's because medical students grad-

### MEDICAL GROUP MEMBERSHIP SWELLS

Group	Physicians	
	2004	2014
Kaiser Permanente	906	1,541
UC Davis	774	980
Sutter Medical Group	244	532
Mercy Medical Group	120	325
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,044</b>	<b>3,378</b>

have a strong incentive to work with a big medical group because that's where the patients are. Most people with insurance pick a plan with their doctors in the network and go to the hospital they recommend.

Doctors who remain independent have joined together in a different way – through independent practice associa-

director of the Office of Statewide Health Planning & Development.

"It reflects the need to have infrastructure and electric medical records," Zaretsky said. "The Affordable Care Act is feeding that trend, too, because of the need to coordinate care and for hospitals and physicians to work together."

While new doctors flock to large medical groups, health systems are making plays of their own to bring more expertise in house.

Sutter Health acquired Radiological Associates of Sacramento Medical Group Inc. on Feb. 1. The deal ended a rift between the two companies and brought 60 physician partners and most of the 800 RAS employees in-house. The move is similar to one executed by Dignity Health in 2007 when it absorbed Sacramento Radiology Medical Group.

There's been consolidation in emer-

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*"Even if this ruling does not affect our state directly, it could have major future impact on how the ACA is funded through employer fines. If the subsidy no longer exists, the trigger for the employer mandate fine is gutted."*



**CAROLYN LEWIS**, spokeswoman, Sacramento Association of Health Underwriters, on the federal appeals court ruling that subsidies can't be offered through the federal exchange.