




## Current and expected use of EMRs

The implementation of electronic medical records (EMRs) in physicians' offices, replacing paper-based record-keeping systems, is a much studied topic in Canadian health care. There are many benefits to using the electronic record format: back-up copies are easily stored<sup>1</sup>; there is better adherence to guideline-based care; and there are decision support functions within an EMR.<sup>2</sup> Arguments for reduced costs and improved quality and effectiveness of care have been made<sup>1</sup>; however, according to a meta-analysis on this topic, the evidence of these positive effects is still limited.<sup>2</sup>

The limited data, in combination with restrictions due to funding, as well as a lack of overall standardization, both from the perspective of government requirements and information technology,<sup>3</sup> have hindered EMRs from becoming the mainstream method of medical record-keeping in Canada. According to the results of the 2007 National Physician Survey (NPS), only 12.3% of Canadian FPs and GPs use EMRs exclusively, and an additional 19.4% use EMRs in combination with traditional paper-based charts.

From the NPS data (Figure 1), it is clear that younger physicians are more likely to adopt EMRs in their practices. Almost 44% of FPs and GPs younger than 35 years use EMRs, compared with 20% of physicians older than

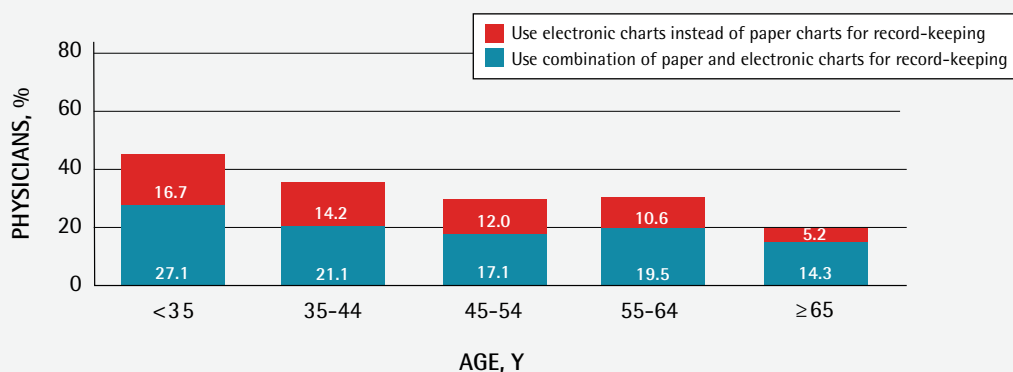
65 years and 30% of physicians between the ages of 55 and 64 years. Data from second-year family medicine residents show that 73% of them used or were exposed to EMRs as part of their clinical training; 75% expect to be using EMRs upon entering practice; and 61% agree that training for computer skills and clinical information retrieval should be a mandatory part of the medical residency curriculum.

The NPS is a collaborative project of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Additional results are available at [www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca](http://www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca). If you would like the opportunity to develop and write a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact **Harleen Sahota**, National Physician Survey Project Manager, at 800 387-6197, extension 416, or [hs@cfpc.ca](mailto:hs@cfpc.ca). 

### References

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3. Health Canada [website]. *Toward electronic health records*. Ottawa, ON: Health Canada; 2001. Available from: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/pubs/ehealth-esante/2001-towards-vers-ehr-dse/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/pubs/ehealth-esante/2001-towards-vers-ehr-dse/index-eng.php). Accessed 2009 Dec 1.

**Figure 1. Percentage of FPs and GPs who use EMRs, by age\***



EMR—electronic medical record.

\*The responding sample has been weighted to represent the population.