Access to Primary Care in Canada
National Physician Survey perspective

Artem Safarov, Inese Grava-Gubins, Jonas Eriksson
College of Family Physicians of Canada
NAPCRG, New Orleans, Dec 2012
Data Collection

• The National Physician Survey (NPS) - conjoint study by:
  – College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)
  – Canadian Medical Association (CMA)
  – Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Royal College)

• Full census survey of every physician, medical student and resident in Canada
  – 90,079 recipients in 2010.
  – Online and paper versions of the survey.

• Physician response rate in 2010: 18%
  – Database contains information from 12,076 physicians

• NPS data is weighted on several demographic variables to reliably represent the total population of Canadian physicians.
Population of interest

• FP/GPs who indicated one of the following as their primary patient care settings:
  – Private office/clinic (regular or walk-in)
  – Community clinic/health centre
  – Academic health sciences centre (AHSC)
  – Hospitals (Community hospitals, Teaching hospitals)
  – Universities

• 5,500 FP/GPs (n), weighted to represent a population N= 28,623 FP/GPs.
Primary Care in Canada

• Family physicians and general practitioners (FP/GPs) are the principal providers of primary healthcare in Canada (52% of all physicians in Canada). The public’s access to other specialty physicians occurs mainly by referral.

• A recent survey comparing access to primary care in eleven developed countries found that Canada ranked lowest on percentage of patients reporting that they were able to see a doctor or a nurse on the “same or next day”, and highest on having to wait 6 days or more¹.
There was a decrease in accessibility to primary care physicians in Canada from 2007 to 2010, despite the ratio of physicians increasing from 192 to 203 per 100,000 population.

### FP/GPs accessibility by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FP/GPs able to see an urgent patient within a day or less</th>
<th>FP/GPs able to see non-urgent patients within a week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Wait times for an FP/GP appointment by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average wait (in days) for an urgent appointment</th>
<th>Average wait (in weeks) for a non-urgent appointment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NPS data (n)</td>
<td>8,420</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Data (N)</td>
<td>24,856</td>
<td>28,623</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding a primary care doctor in Canada has not become easier since 2004.

Canadian FP/GP Practices accepting new patients by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Practice - closed</th>
<th>Practice - partially closed</th>
<th>Practice - open</th>
<th>No response</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NPS data (n) | 2004 | 2007 | 2010 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10,132</td>
<td>8,420</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weighted Data (N) | 2004 | 2007 | 2010 |
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>28,623</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Access to primary care for rural/urban populations

No major differences in accessibility for urgent primary care. Non-urgent care more readily accessible for urban populations.

### FP/GP accessibility by population served

- **Urban**
  - 67%
  - 46%
  - FP/GPs able to see an urgent patient within a day or less
  - FP/GPs able to see non-urgent patients within a week

- **Small Town**
  - 66%
  - 39%
  - FP/GPs able to see an urgent patient within a day or less
  - FP/GPs able to see non-urgent patients within a week

- **Rural/Remote**
  - 66%
  - 41%
  - FP/GPs able to see an urgent patient within a day or less
  - FP/GPs able to see non-urgent patients within a week

### FP/GP wait times by population served

- **Urban**
  - 1.3 days
  - 3.0 weeks

- **Small Town**
  - 1.5 days
  - 3.1 weeks

- **Rural/Remote**
  - 1.4 days
  - 3.1 weeks

### Data

<table>
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<tr>
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The number of patients an FP/GP was able to see per week has decreased from 116 in 2007 to 109 in 2010 (6% decrease).

Factors increasing demands on FP/GPs time in 2010

- Increasing patient expectations: 66%
- Increasing workload/paperwork: 69%
- Aging patient population: 72%
- Management of chronic diseases: 77%
- Increasing complexity of caseload: 79%

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FP/GPs using electronic records report shorter wait times and improved primary care accessibility.

FP/GPs in practices with electronic-only record keeping see 118 patients per week vs. 113 patients per week for those use paper records only. Those who use a mix of electronic and paper records see 95 patients/week.

### FP/GP accessibility by use of electronic records

- **FP/GPs using electronic records**
  - 75% able to see an urgent patient within a day or less
  - 62% able to see non-urgent patients within a week

- **FP/GPs not using electronic records**
  - 48% able to see an urgent patient within a day or less
  - 41% able to see non-urgent patients within a week

### FP/GP wait times by use of electronic records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2010</th>
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<tr>
<td>NPS data (n)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weighted Data (N)</td>
<td>28,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average wait (in days) for an urgent appointment</strong></td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average wait (in weeks) for a non-urgent appointment</strong></td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential solutions – electronic records

- Average wait (in days) for an urgent appointment: 1.01
- Average wait (in weeks) for a non-urgent appointment: 1.69

NPS data (n): 5,500

Weighted Data (N): 28,623
Potential solutions – practice organizations

FP/GPs in group practices report the best primary care accessibility

FP/GPs in partially open group practices accepted the most new patients:
75 new patients in the last year, vs. 61 for solo practices and 55 for interprofessional teams.

Only 15% of group practices were open to accepting new patients with no restrictions, vs. 18% of solo practices and 22% of interprofessional teams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FP/GP accessibility by practice type</th>
<th>FP/GP wait times by practice type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FP/GPs able to see an urgent patient within a day or less</td>
<td>Average wait (in days) for an urgent appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>Group Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP/GPs able to see non-urgent patients within a week</td>
<td>Average wait (in weeks) for a non-urgent appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>Group Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NPS data (n) 5,500
Weighted Data (N) 28.62
2010
Conclusions

• Increasing complexity of patient caseload, patient expectations, workload/paperwork and management of chronic disease in the aging population are increasing demands on the time of family physicians providing primary care in Canada.

• Accessibility to primary care is decreasing slightly and wait times are growing, across settings. Canadian FP/GPs were able to see 6% fewer patients per week in 2010, compared to 2007.

• FP/GPs using electronic record keeping systems, and working in group practices are more accessible to Canadians.
Acknowledgements

This presentation was created utilizing original data collected for the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada's (Royal College) National Physician Survey Database. The NPS study and all of the data contained therein are the copyright protected works of the CFPC, CMA, and Royal College and cannot be copied or reproduced in whole or in part without permission of the CFPC, CMA, Royal College.


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Are you looking for comprehensive up to date information on Canadian physicians?

The aggregate NPS results for 2004, 2007 and 2010 are available online at www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca

Data users can submit requests for custom analysis or record-level data

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