

## News Release

### Canada's Largest Physician Survey Flags a Lack of Patient Care Resources and Workforce Planning

#### 2013 National Physician Survey reveals new data

(October 23, 2013, Ottawa, ON) — New data released from the 2013 National Physician Survey (NPS) show that physicians are concerned over gaps in our health care system that may be adversely affecting patient care. Access to key health care resources, the impact of Canada's aging population and workforce planning issues are posing significant challenges for Canada's doctors.

The survey found that the leading concerns among physicians include the insufficient availability of hospital beds, access to publicly-funded physiotherapists, and advanced diagnostic imaging tools.

"For family physicians, the NPS findings reflect some positive changes to health care in our country," said Dr. Marie-Dominique Beaulieu, president of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). "We are pleased to see progress being made but we remain concerned with access to key resources that are needed to ensure quality care for all people in Canada."

Since 2004, the NPS has been a research project conducted jointly by CFPC, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Royal College). With nearly 10,500 physicians responding this year, the survey is an important barometer of the country's present and future doctors on a wide range of health care issues.

Among key findings of the 2013 NPS is the fact that physicians continue to work an average of 54 hours a week providing direct patient care, research, teaching and administration. Most average an additional 110 hours per month providing on-call services in addition to regular practice hours. Even with these long work hours, most physicians (59%) were employed to their satisfaction although nearly one-third indicated they were overworked.

The 2013 NPS also closely examined the issue of physicians who were unemployed or under-employed. These issues were most common among younger physicians and specialists in resource-intensive disciplines such as cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, general surgery, orthopedic surgery, nuclear medicine and gastroenterology, which require access to operating rooms, diagnostic equipment and other resources. Critical care physicians reported the highest rate of under- or unemployment at 31%.

"Ensuring Canada has the right mix and supply of physicians to meet the needs of patients requires first

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and foremost that the federal government lead development of a national health human resources strategy and a permanent agency to support ongoing health workforce planning," said Royal College president, Dr. Cecil Rorabeck.

The survey also noted a shift in terms of the adoption of technology. The use of electronic records has jumped from 39% in 2010, to 62% in 2013. Not surprisingly, a quarter of the respondents indicated they had been using electronic records for less than 3 years.

The NPS data also highlight the fact that as Canada's population ages, care requirements are also shifting. Fifty nine percent of geriatric medicine specialists reported a major increase in the need for their services over the past two years. Dermatology was another area where over half of respondents (53%) indicated there had been a major increase in demand for services.

"Canada's doctors know that we need to make changes now to respond to the evolving health care needs of our aging society," said CMA president, Dr. Louis Hugo Francescutti. "As a first step that means we need our federal government to lead the development of a national strategy for seniors care in collaboration with the provinces and territories. The time to act is now."

Link to [NPS 2013 Backgrounder](#).

For more information, please visit [www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca](http://www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca) or contact us at [info@nationalphysiciansurvey.ca](mailto:info@nationalphysiciansurvey.ca).