



## Media Release

### Huge growth in Canadian doctors use of information technology, National Physician Survey reveals

Ottawa – Dec. 2, 2014 – More Canadian physicians than ever are embracing information technology. New data from the 2014 National Physician Survey (NPS) shows significant increases in the use of information technology since previous surveys in 2007 and 2010.

Seventy-five per cent of physicians report using electronic records to enter or retrieve clinical patient notes on a laptop or desktop. The number has tripled from 26% in 2007.

“A huge growth in the use of information technology is taking place across Canada,” said Dr. Cecil Rorabeck, President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. “Doctors are not only using information technology more, but finding it enhances their ability to provide high-quality patient care.”

Sixty-five percent of physicians reported seeing better or much better quality of care since the implementation of electronic records, a rise of nine percentage points from last year. Physicians in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario were most likely to report using electronic records at close to 81% in each according to the NPS findings. Cancer specialists had very high usage with radiation oncologists 96%, of medical oncologists 97% and for family physicians 77%.

“It’s great to see more family physicians moving to electronic record systems and electronic tools,” says Dr. Garey Mazowita, College of Family Physicians of Canada President. “The benefits include faster access to test results and reviews of medication lists and interactions, and that means more timely health care for our patients. Going forward it will be important to enhance issues related to technical support, system compatibility and privacy requirements to ensure maximum efficiency of the technology.”

Most frequent benefits that were quoted include identifying lab results, ability to access a patient’s chart remotely, being alerted to critical test results or to potential medication warnings.

Electronic tools used by physicians other than EMRs are also on the rise. The most frequent use of electronic tools is the access to lab/diagnostic test results — 80 per cent compared to 38% in 2010. Fifty-eight per cent of physicians use electronic tools to review what medications are being taken by a patient and 45% to provide warnings for drug interactions as well as for referrals to other physicians.

Physicians reported several challenges in accessing information: 52% reported technical glitches, 46% with compatibility issues with other systems and 26% complaining about firewall or security issues.

“Adoption of information technology among physicians has reached a tipping point, and we’re starting to see significant improvement on quality and efficiency of care as a result,” said Dr. Cindy Forbes, President-elect of the Canadian Medical Association. “However, governments still need to keep their ‘pedal to the metal’ and continue to financially support physician efforts to implement EMRs so that we may fully unlock the promise of digital health system-wide.”



The 2014 survey builds on the previous surveys with a focus on use of information technology by physicians of Canada. This year, more than 10,000 licensed physicians from across the country completed the online electronic survey.

Since 2004, the NPS has been the largest census survey in Canada that gathers the opinions of physicians, medical residents and students on a wide range of health care issues.

The NPS is implemented collaboratively by the College of Family Physicians of Canada, Canadian Medical Association and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

The 2014 NPS website ([nationalphysiciansurvey.ca](http://nationalphysiciansurvey.ca)) includes results by province, specialty and certain demographic characteristics of the responders.

### Highlights in numbers

- An increasing number of physicians can access their electronic records at their office, clinic or community health centre (64%) and from a hospital (62%).
- Exclusive use of electronic systems was most prevalent in Alberta (40%), followed by Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario at 35% each.
- The use of electronic records as a tool to manage a patient's chronic condition is also increasingly common— 82% of family physicians and 68% of other specialists who treat chronic conditions use electronic record to help them do so.
- 25% of Canadian physicians report using telehealth/telemedicine technologies in their practice, up from 13 per cent for similar services 10 years ago. Newfoundland and Labrador leads the country in usage of telemedicine for consulting with other providers at 56 per cent.
- Twenty-nine percent of physicians report using electronic records exclusively over paper. At 42%, family physicians were more likely to have gone completely electronic as well as other specialities such as anatomical pathologists (45%) and diagnostic radiologists (51%).

Visit the [NPS 2014 Backgrounder](#)

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

*The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is the home of specialty care in Canada, setting the standards for postgraduate medical education, supporting the continuing professional development of more than 44,000 specialists, and assisting health system innovations nationwide.*

*The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) represents more than 32,000 members across the country. It is the professional organization responsible for establishing standards for the training and certification of family physicians. The CFPC reviews and accredits continuing professional development programs and materials that enable family physicians to meet certification and licencing requirements and lifelong learning interests. It also accredits postgraduate family medicine training in Canada's 17 medical schools. The College provides quality services, supports family medicine teaching and research, and advocates on behalf of family physicians and the specialty of family medicine.*

*The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is the national voice of Canadian physicians. Founded in 1867, the CMA is a voluntary professional organization representing more than 80,000 of Canada's physicians and comprising 12 provincial and territorial medical associations and 60 national medical organizations. CMA's mission is helping physicians care for patients. The CMA will be the leader in engaging and serving physicians and be the national voice for the highest standards for health and health care.*

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