

MDs' work/on-call duties average 83 hours per week: survey

by Patrick Sullivan

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Canadian physicians worked an average of 51.4 hours per week last year, results from the [2010 National Physician Survey](#) (NPS) indicate. This is up slightly from the 50.7 hours reported in the 2004 NPS, and a slight decline from the 2007 result (51.7 hours). When on-call duties are added to that total, physicians were on the job approximately 83 hours per week in 2010.

"That is a pretty heavy workload by any standard," CMA President John Haggie said of the NPS results, which are being analyzed by the CMA's Canadian Collaborative Centre for Physician Resources (C3PR).

According to the centre, results from surveys stretching back 14 years reveal that the average amount of time spent on direct patient care dropped by 8.1% between 1997 and 2010, from 35.6 hours/week to 32.7 hours. During the same period, the amount of time spent filling out forms and completing charts increased by 35%, to 6.1 hours per week.

Physicians in the youngest age group (under 35 years) spend the most time providing direct patient care, 34.3 hours/week, while those 65 and older spend the least (26.6 hours).

Although female physicians reported working fewer hours per week than males in 2010 (48.2 vs. 53.3), C3PR says this gap appears to be narrowing. In the 2010 NPS, for example, male physicians indicated they worked 5.1 hours more per week than females, a significant decline from the 8.4-hour difference reported in 1997.

The 2010 survey was the first of the three conducted by the NPS since 2004 to take an in-depth look at the impact of parenting on physicians' work hours.

It found that the difference between women and men is only 2.2 hours/week for doctors who have no children, but "the figures change significantly when children are added to the picture."

The C3PR analysis adds: "Overall, fathers work 6.2 hours per week more than mothers do, and this gap widens depending on the age of the youngest child. Males with children under age 6 work 11 hours more per week than females [but] the differences lessen as the children get older. When the children are older than 20, the gap between male and female parents is only one hour."

The analysis also notes that female physicians who work the fewest hours - those with children under age 6 - still work more than 45 hours a week, and have additional on-call duties.

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