



Access to home care

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Home care plays an essential role in the continuum of health care services, and FPs play a vital role in ensuring that their patients receive comprehensive, continuing health care in the home setting. According to the 2007 National Physician Survey (NPS), a total of 52.8% of FPs across Canada provided liaison services to the home care sector for their patients.

Over the past 20 years, the home health care sector has experienced substantial growth and is now the fastest growing sector of health care in Canada.¹ The growth of this sector can be attributed to the following:

- an increase in the aging population;
- advancements in technology and treatment, allowing for a broader range of therapies and services to be delivered safely in the home;
- the government's search for cost-effective alternatives to institutional care;
- shortages of acute and long-term care beds;
- the increased demand for home care by patients and their families; and
- changing attitudes toward institutional care.

Despite growing needs in the home health care sector, however, the 2007 NPS revealed that only 2.9% of all physicians (FPs and other specialists) rated accessibility to home care for their patients as excellent, 12.8% as very good, and 27.8% as good. The rates are similar at the provincial level, varying only slightly (Figure 1). Nationally, physicians felt that access to home care for their patients was far from ideal.

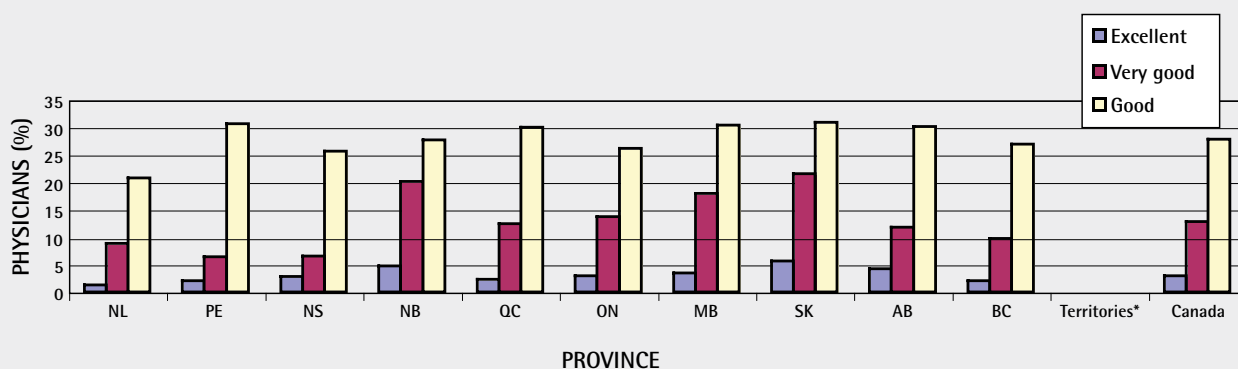
The NPS is a collaborative project of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Additional results are available at www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca. If you would like the opportunity to develop and write a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact **Sarah Scott**, National Physician Survey and Janus Project Coordinator, at 800 387-6197, extension 289, or sks@cfpc.ca.

Ms Kotecha is Research and Program Manager and Dr Birtwhistle is Director at the Centre for Studies in Primary Care at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont.

Reference

1. The Canadian Home Care Association. *The integral role of home care in improving access to care*. Ottawa, ON: The Canadian Home Care Association; 2007. Available from: www.cdnhomecare.ca/media.php?mid=1374. Accessed 2008 Oct 27.

Figure 1. Percentage of physicians (FPs and other specialists) rating patients' access to home care as excellent, very good, or good, by province



* Results for the Territories suppressed because of small cell counts.