Fast Facts
National Physician Survey

Palliative care

Given the aging baby boomer cohort and the fact that people are tending to live longer, it is estimated that by the year 2020 there will be 40% more deaths annually than in 2003; most of these people will die as a result of a prolonged illness.[1] According to the 2007 National Physician Survey (NPS), the status of palliative care in Canada is as follows:

Current physician involvement in palliative care

- Among FPs who provide patient care, 55% provide palliative care.
- A greater percentage of male FPs compared with female FPs provide palliative care ($P<.001$) (**Figure 1**).
- Family physicians between the ages of 45 and 64 years are more likely to provide palliative care (**Figure 1**). This is likely related to their aging practice populations as they get older.

Future physician involvement in palliative care

- Fifty-five percent of second-year family medicine residents intend to provide palliative care once they are in practice.
- Among medical students, 59% of first-year students, 63% of second-year students, and 64% of third- and fourth-year students indicated that end-of-life issues were of interest to them.

Access to palliative care services

In 2004, 64% of FPs who responded to the NPS rated access to palliative care services for their patients as good to excellent. In 2007, this increased slightly to 67% of FP respondents (**Figure 2**).

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.**

Reference

1. Health Canada. *Canadian strategy on palliative and end-of-life care.* Ottawa, ON: Health Canada; 2007. Available from **www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/alt_formats/hpb-dgps/pdf/pubs/2007-soin_fin-end_life/2007-soin-fin-end_life-eng.pdf.** Accessed 2008 Jul 23.

Figure 1: Percent of FPs providing palliative care, by sex and age (in years), in 2007.

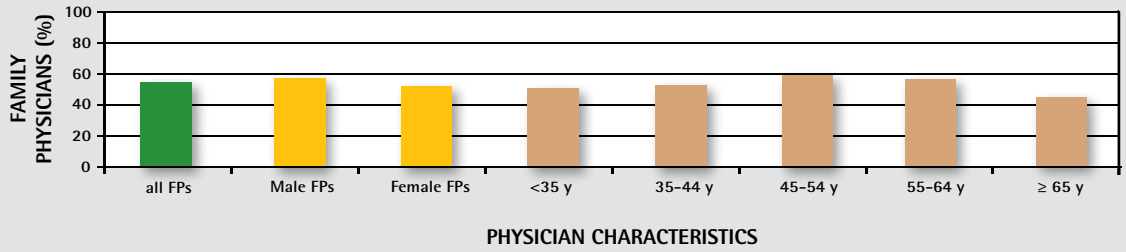
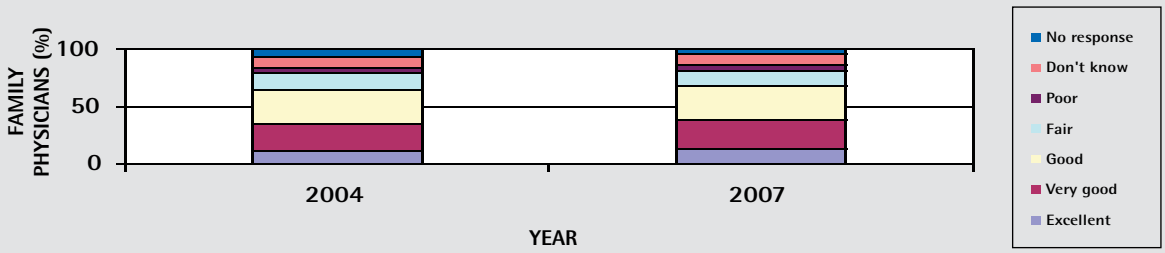
Figure 2. Family physicians rating access to palliative care services for their patients in 2004 versus 2007