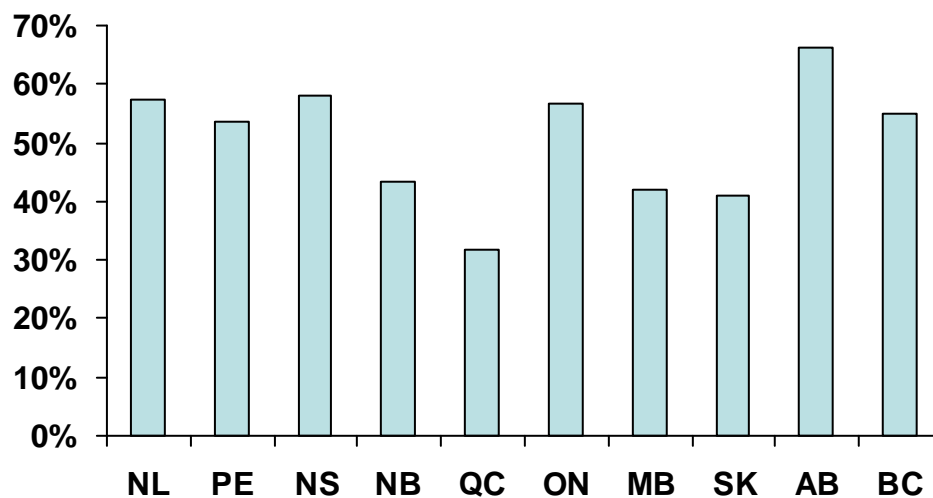


Use of Information Technology Results of the 2010 National Physician Survey

The 2010 National Physician Survey indicates that physicians continue to embrace new technologies but the uptake varies across jurisdictions and specialty disciplines.

Significant changes were seen in record keeping systems since the 2007 National Physician Survey. In 2010, 38% of physicians reported having paper charts only, down from 58% in 2007. Use of a combination of paper and electronic records increased from 26% of physicians to 34% and the use of electronic records instead of paper charts rose from 10% to 16%. Alberta was ahead of all other provinces with two-thirds of physicians using only electronic records or a combination of paper and electronic records. Quebec had the smallest proportion with less than a third (32%), see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Percent using electronic records or combination of paper and electronic by province, 2011

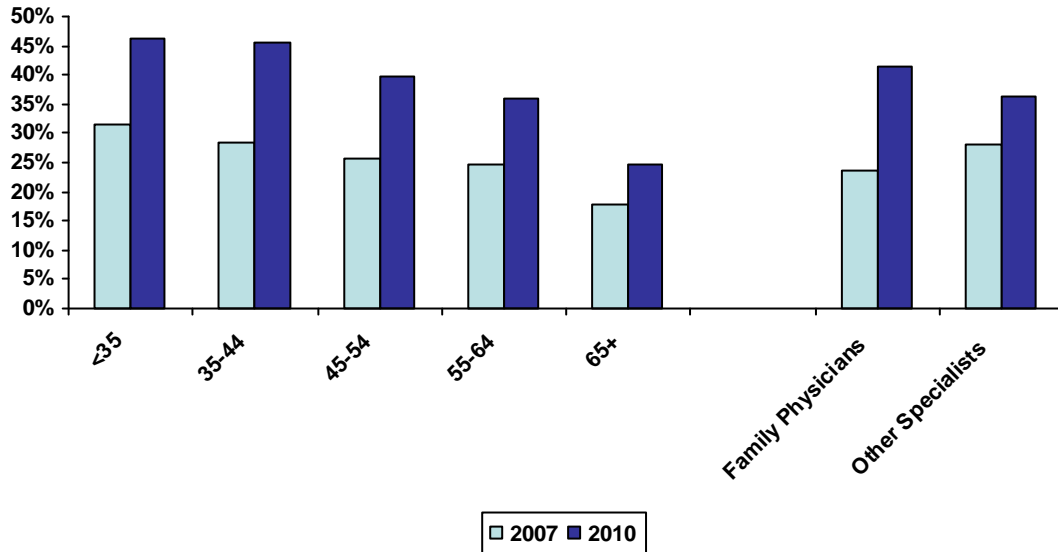


Although family physicians (FPs) were a little more likely to use paper only (41%) compared to other specialists (34%), the percent of FPs using electronic records instead of paper (22%) was double the proportion for other specialists (10%). Not unexpectedly, use of electronic records was more common among younger physicians.

In a separate question that asked about usage of a variety of electronic tools, 39% of respondents reported having electronic records on a PC or laptop to enter and retrieve clinical patient notes. This is up from 26% using these kinds of records in 2007. FPs, at 41%, showed significant gains from the 24% reporting use of electronic records in 2007.

Almost half (46%) of the youngest group of physicians had them on a PC or laptop compared to just a quarter of those 65 or older (see Figure 2). An additional 11% of all physicians in 2010 intend to have them within two years.

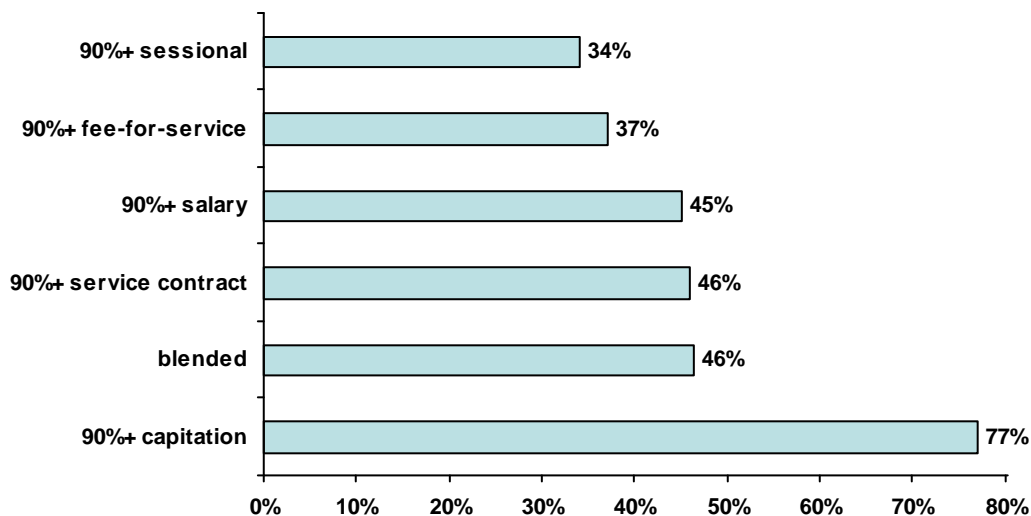
Figure 2: Percentage of physicians using electronic records to enter and retrieve clinical patient notes on a PC or laptop, 2007 and 2010.



Of family physicians who use electronic patient records, 69% could access them from the office, community clinic or community health centre; only 38% of other specialists could do so. Specialists were more likely to be able to access records from a hospital, academic health science centre or emergency department (72%) compared to less than half (49%) of FPs. Many doctors also mentioned being able to access records from home.

At 77%, physicians paid primarily through capitation (adjusted amounts per year per patient) were most likely to use electronic records whereas physicians paid primarily fee-for-service were among the least likely to use them (37%). See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Percent of physicians who use electronic records to enter and retrieve clinical patient notes on a PC or laptop by remuneration method, 2010.



Note: Blended means multiple methods of payment that may include fee-for-service. Blended was defined as respondents who did not have any single source account for 90%+ of their income.

For physicians who accessed electronic records from a variety of locations, 28% indicated they could access the same records from all the settings. Another 26% said only some settings were connected and 18% said none were connected.

For all electronic applications, use was most prevalent among younger physicians although by no means exclusively. Almost half (46%) of all physicians had electronic patient appointment/scheduling systems on a PC or laptop and 6% plan to have one in the next two years. Less than a third of doctors over 65 had an appointment system, compared to half of those under the age of 35.

The most likely application to be on a physician's handheld wireless device was email (15% of physicians) followed by online access to journals, clinical practice guidelines, etc. at 9% and warnings for adverse prescribing/drug interactions at 7%.

Some physicians (18%) said they had a practice website, representing only a slight increase from the 17% who had one in 2007. With the exception of those physicians over 65 at 13%, age was not a strong predictor of having a website. Male and female physicians were equally likely to have a site. Of those who have a website, only 14% of respondents indicated that their patients could use their site to request an appointment.

Half of all physicians reported referring patients to websites in general, slightly more FPs (55%) than other specialists (44%) and fewer doctors 65 or older (33%) than other age groups. The most common reason for doing so was to get information on diseases (89%) followed by treatment information (66%) and patient support (63%).

Well over half (58%) of respondents use email to communicate with colleagues for clinical purposes. Two thirds (67%) of consulting specialists do so compared to half of family physicians although FPs saw a 10 percentage point increase in those emailing colleagues for clinical purposes since 2007 when it stood at 40%. Emailing patients for clinical purposes became slightly more prevalent between 2007 and 2010 with the proportion of physicians doing so increasing from 13% to 16%.

For details on the methodology and response rate of the National Physician Survey, visit www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca. Results are considered to be accurate within +/- 1.2% 19 times out of 20.

Lynda Buske
Canadian Collaborative Centre for Physician Resources
Canadian Medical Association
December, 2011