

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 4, 2004**--The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) and the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) are pleased to announce the most comprehensive survey of all Canadian physicians ever. The National Physician Survey (NPS) will ask the 60,000 family physicians and specialists practicing in communities across the country to respond to a questionnaire which will help create the most detailed database ever developed in Canada of physician practice patterns and future plans.

The NPS database will provide information critical to developing a clearer understanding of many of the access and waiting time problems being experienced by patients across Canada.

Analyses of the results of the NPS will help Canadians become better informed about many of the realities of physician practices, including doctors' working hours, locations of practice, age and gender of physicians, types of services offered in different practice settings, populations served, payment modes, and use of technology. Not only will we learn more about how today's physicians practice and what their future plans are, we will also get a read on what physicians in training are planning to do by surveying medical residents and students.

Important decisions about the numbers and kinds of physicians to train in our medical schools, or what recruitment strategies to put in place to ensure that core medical services are delivered to patients will be able to be made with the critical data of the NPS to support them.

"These decisions are having profound effects on the accessibility, not to mention the quality, of patient care," says Dr. Robert Wedel, CFPC President and a family physician in Taber, Alberta. "Why not make them with sound research and an understanding of what doctors do and plan to do in the next few years in order to provide the highest quality of care in a timely fashion to our patients."

In addition to the three partnering organizations, the project is supported by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and Health Canada. It builds on previous independent survey efforts of the CFPC, the RCPSC and the CMA.

"The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) is happy to be involved in this unique initiative," says Dr. John McDonald, RCPSC President and a practicing specialist in London, Ontario. "The results of the survey will be extremely helpful in better understanding not only the number of doctors that are needed, but also what physicians actually do when they see patients in their practices and other segments of their working lives. Cutting down on the number of questionnaires our members receive is also a big advantage of this combined survey."

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According to the Canadian Medical Association's President Dr. Sunil Patel, a family doctor in Gimli, Manitoba, "In this climate of physician shortages and changing patient needs, the profile of physician services is becoming increasingly complex. Simply counting the number of licensed family doctors and specialists, without taking into account what services they are delivering to their patients, will not tell us what we need to know about the services being provided."

Questionnaires are going to physicians by e-mail and by mail over the next three months, with results available in the Fall of 2004.

*The College of Family Physicians of Canada is the voice of family medicine in Canada. Representing 16,500 members across the country, it is the professional organization responsible for establishing standards for the training, certification, and lifelong education of family physicians and for advocating on behalf of family medicine, family physicians and their patients. The CFPC accredits postgraduate family medicine training in Canada's 16 medical schools.*

*The Canadian Medical Association is the national voice of physicians in Canada. The CMA mission is to serve and unite the physicians of Canada and be the national advocate, in partnership with the people of Canada for the highest standards of health and health care.*

*The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is a national, private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the highest standards and quality of health care. The College defines the national standards for the education, assessment, and certification of medical and surgical specialists; and requires its 38,000 members in 92 countries to maintain their competence throughout their careers. The College also contributes to the development of sound health policy.*

- 30 -

**For more information contact:**

Carole Lavigne  
Manager, Media Relations  
Canadian Medical Association (CMA)  
(613) 731-8610 ext. 1266

Pierrette Leonard  
Public Affairs Officer  
The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC)  
(613) 730-6201

Leslie Stafford  
Communications and Media Relations Officer  
The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)  
(905) 628-0900 ext. 303