



## Backgrounder

# NATIONAL PHYSICIAN SURVEY 2007

### About the National Physician Survey

The overall goal of the National Physician Survey (NPS) is to produce a comprehensive database documenting current trends in the physician workforce in Canada in response to both societal and professional changes in education and practice. Unique in its breadth and depth as Canada's primary database on the physician workforce, the NPS is a survey of the total population of physicians in Canada — practising family doctors and other specialists — as well as second-year medical residents and all medical students.

### About the NPS Collaborative

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) and The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) have combined their resources to conduct this survey. Financial support for the NPS comes from these three major national medical organizations in addition to the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

### About the Questionnaires

NPS questionnaires have evolved from the CFPC's National Family Physician Workforce Survey, the CMA's Physician Resource Questionnaire and the RCPSC's Specialist Questionnaire. The NPS in 2004 had five different questionnaires:

1. Family Physician / General Practitioner Questionnaire
2. Other Specialist Physician Questionnaire
3. Family Medicine Resident (PGY2) Questionnaire
4. Other Specialty Medicine Resident (PGY2) Questionnaire
5. Medical Student Questionnaire

The *Family Physician and Other Specialist Physician Questionnaires* collect information from those in clinical practice as well as other medical fields, e.g. teaching, administration, research. Questions focus on issues such as practice settings, areas of specialization, perspectives regarding patient access to different types of care, satisfaction levels in practice, workloads, types of communities served, how practices are changing, and the roles or impacts of computer technology on the clinical, administrative and educational aspects of practice.

The *Student and Resident Questionnaires* focus on medical education and training (past, present, and future), choices about future practices, financial concerns and factors influencing entry to medical school. Asking similar questions of second-year medical residents enables trend analyses over time.

## NPS Findings and Data Utilization

Leaders in academic and research communities recognize that the NPS findings are key to present and future physician workforce planning and decision-making. Consequently, NPS data is shared publicly with key stakeholders after appropriate analyses. A website is also maintained at [nationalphysiciansurvey.ca](http://nationalphysiciansurvey.ca). The current website maintains information gathered from nearly 25,000 respondents to the NPS 2004 about:

- Medical practice characteristics by physician age and gender, by different specialities, and by different patient populations served (urban and rural). For example:

*The majority of family doctors (61 per cent) reported being in a group practice compared to 48 per cent of other specialists.*

- The range of services currently provided by Canadian physicians and that future physicians intend to provide. For example:

*Sixty per cent of family physicians either limit the number of new patients they see or are not taking new patients at all.*

*Fifty-seven per cent of family doctors include maternity and newborn care in their practices.*

- Trends in physician perceptions about patient access to long-term care, specialists, diagnostic services and surgical care. For example:

*When asked to rate accessibility to select medical services, more than half of all doctors polled said access to advanced diagnostic services such as magnetic resonance imaging scans and long-term beds was either fair or poor.*

*The vast majority of physicians said they did not have problems obtaining access to emergency room services (68 per cent) or routine diagnostic services (74 per cent).*

- Background information about medical training programs, student and resident selection processes and physician recruitment in Canada. For example:

*One fifth of medical students decided they wanted to be a doctor before high school. An additional 29 per cent made this decision during high school. For 34 per cent, the decision came during undergraduate college or university studies and for 8 per cent it was some time after completing these studies.*

*6.3 per cent of all physician respondents said they plan to retire in the next two years (2004–2006). This would translate to a 3.1 per cent annual rate of retirement, significantly higher than the actual average annual retirement rate of 1–2 per cent per year for at least a decade.*

## NPS 2007 Distribution

Approximately 73,000 individuals in Canada will receive the NPS in January 2007. Practicing physicians will receive either long or short-form questionnaires in the mail and/or email invitations to fill out the online survey. All second-year medical residents and all medical students will receive an email invitation to fill out their NPS online questionnaire.

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### Contacts:

For more information go to **nationalphysiciansurvey.ca**. To request interviews, please contact:

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