

National MD survey coming your way

January 09, 2007 | Matt Borsellino

The Medical Post

OTTAWA | A second mega-survey of doctors across the country will be conducted this year.

Canada's three major national medical organizations announced the news here last month.

They will undertake a second version of the 2004 national physician survey—described as Canada's "primary database" on the physician workforce—that drew national and international attention for its scope and insight into the present and future of the Canadian medical profession.

Senior officials of the Canadian Medical Association, College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada say the new survey will provide "important data" on medical education and practice to help educators, policy makers and planners make informed decisions. The Canadian Institute for Health Information is also a partner in the initiative.

The new survey's questionnaires will be sent to all practising family doctors and specialists, second-year medical residents and all medical students. More than 73,000 will be distributed starting this month.

Questions focus on issues ranging from practice settings to areas of specialization, perspectives on patient access to different types of care and satisfaction levels and workloads. Participants will also be asked their views of the role and impact of computers on clinical, administrative and educational aspects of practice.

CMA president Dr. Colin McMillan described the survey as the profession's "most comprehensive," while CFPC president Dr. Tom Bailey said that to assess changing practice patterns and professional preferences "it's necessary to track these changes over time." He described poll results as "a valued contribution to our understanding trends so we can plan the physician workforce required."

Royal College president Dr. Louise Samson referred to ongoing debates about the rapidly evolving nature of the health-care system, interprofessional health-care teams, changing scopes of practice among both family doctors and specialists and electronic means to manage care. "These and many other developments will be systematically captured by the survey," she added.

The three leaders are urging their members to complete the forms. Their answers, they say, will provide an in-depth look at how physicians work

collaboratively and the impediments they face in providing care. Significantly, too, they will provide a glimpse into the future of medicine in Canada by describing factors shaping the educational and career aspirations of medical students and residents.

Some results are scheduled to be released in November.