



[Back to Cover](#)

April 27, 2004 Volume 40 Issue 17

OPINIONS / EDITORIAL

OPED: Hey! Here's one survey not to be ignored

A mammoth survey incorporating the resources and lobbying power of three national medical groups is now in the field in an historic effort to develop the most detailed picture to date of the character of practice patterns and future plans by physicians coast-to-coast—and it's not one for you to shy away from.

The National Physician Survey is described in news releases as "the most comprehensive survey of all Canadian physicians ever." According to the Canadian Medical Association, College of Family Physicians of Canada and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the unprecedented endeavour builds on their independent efforts. Because of that, and for the potential wealth of info it will hold, it's one poll every self-respecting Canadian doctor should get in on!

The groups hope for a response, either by mail or online, large enough to produce an unequivocal snapshot of medical practice across Canada that stands to be "critical to developing a clearer understanding of many of the access and waiting time problems experienced by patients." Analysis of the results will produce a "balanced, credible and impartial" backbone to the profession's lobbying efforts and become a valuable influence in policymaking discussions with government.

Two different questionnaires—for GPs and specialists—are being sent to 70,000 practising doctors, clinical teachers, administrators, residents and students. The three lobby groups, aided by Health Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information, have reportedly budgeted \$1 million for the undertaking. The monstrous 16-page surveys take nearly half an hour to complete.

Surveys were received by this office early in March. Their extent of detail is eye-popping. There are questions about demographic and geographic data, of course, but also references to 14 different payment mechanisms, 10 practice settings and designation of dozens of disciplines/areas of practice.

Information is also sought about such critical issues as on-call services, perceived access to care, professional satisfaction and how participants changed their practice over the last two years and what they plan to do over the next two. There are also questions about information technology, considered by many to be the biggest single obstacle to primary care reform in Ontario.

"Survey results will be extremely helpful in better understanding not only the number of doctors that's needed, but also what physicians actually do when they see patients in their practices and other segments of their working lives," said Royal College president Dr. John MacDonald.

The survey's first deadline—and first indication of how Canadian doctors are responding to the effort—comes in early May. If the response is light, efforts will be renewed this summer with results available as early as this fall. Can there be a better way to help decide your own destiny? Take the time and make your voice heard.—*Matt Borsellino, national editor*

[Back to Contents](#)

© Copyright 2003 *The Medical Post*. All rights reserved.

