For several years, the Section of Residents newsletter, *Family Matters*, was independently distributed through the Council of the Section of Residents. Now *Canadian Family Physician* will host a Family Matters series here in the Residents' Views section of the journal. The mission of articles in the Family Matters series is 2-fold:

- to inform resident members of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) of ongoing issues and the benefits available to them through their College membership; and
- to inform the general membership of the CFPC of the ongoing discussions of the Section of Residents.

Residents' representation

The entire resident body makes up the Section of Residents of the CFPC, and it is represented by the Council of the Section of Residents, which is composed of elected resident members (Figure 1). The Council of Residents has representatives on the main College committees and 3 voting representatives on the CFPC Board of Directors. As such, College decisions regarding program accreditation, the Certification examination, and evaluation objectives are all affected by resident perspectives.

Certification examination

The CFPC is responsible for the preparation and administration of the Certification Examination in Family Medicine, and the College website ([www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca)) is an excellent place to get started for examination preparation. The “Exam Information” page has links to further details about the examination, including a guide that explains the nature of the written and oral components of the examination (SAMPs [short answer management problems] and SOOs [simulated office orals]).
Resident’s Views

College website lists the 99 priority topics considered central knowledge for competence in family medicine.1

Examination fees and structure
Over the past several years, better examination translation and the need for more examination sites have been issues brought forth by resident members of the College. For example, Francophone residents have voiced concerns about the quality of translation of some questions on the examination. In response to this, the CFPC has recruited additional resources to improve consistency of the examination between the 2 official languages.

In addition, the need for enhanced examination security and a more modern examination process has been a concern for residents and examination administrators. This created an impetus for an electronic format for the written component of the examination (ie, SAMPs). The technological basis of this new examination platform is derived from the system used by the Medical Council of Canada. As most residents have written the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examinations before the CFPC Certification examination, this new format will be familiar to candidates. In addition, an electronic version of the examination will undoubtedly be more secure than a paper version. With the electronic examination, French-speaking or bilingual residents will be able to toggle back and forth between the French and English versions of the questions, should there be any concerns about translation. For the 2011 spring examination, it has been proposed that 7 new examination centres and a new electronic written format of the examination be introduced. The oral component of the examination (ie, SOOs) will continue to be administered in the same face-to-face format.

Unfortunately, these changes will come with greater administration costs, and further decisions and details will be forthcoming regarding the amount of this increase and where the increased funding will come from. It is likely that some of the increased cost of the examination will be borne by residents. Some, but not all, residents will benefit from reduced travel costs if they are in the vicinity of a new examination centre. The Council of the Section of Residents has been involved in discussions at all levels about the changes in examination fees and will continue to help disseminate this information to resident members as final decisions and numbers become available. It is important to recognize that many of these new developments are a direct response to resident concerns, and that the proposed examination enhancements should lead to a smoother examination process for everyone.

Dr Burke is Past Chair of the Communications subcommittee of the Council of the Section of Residents of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. Dr Ng is Chair and Dr Gupta is Vice Chair of the Council of the Section of Residents of the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

Competing interests
None declared

Reference

Want to be published?
Canadian Family Physician is looking for thoughtful articles from current family medicine residents. Please contact the Residents’ Views Coordinator, Dr Victor Ng, at residentsviews@cfpc.ca for more information on submitting your paper to Canadian Family Physician.