

# Addiction medicine and substance abuse care

Unfortunately, the need for addiction medicine and substance abuse care is still a considerable part of the Canadian health care system. A recent study estimated the prevalence of substance abuse among the Canadian population to be 11%.<sup>1</sup> According to data from the 2010 National Physician Survey (NPS), 30% of Canadian FPs and GPs offer substance abuse care, with 3% identifying it as the area of focus for their practices. Addictions are also a considerable problem for the Canadian population. Sixty-nine percent of FPs and GPs report seeing patients with addictions, and 4% of physicians report that patients with addictions represent 10% or more of their patient populations. Among the family medicine residents who responded to the 2010 NPS, 48% indicated that they intended to provide care for patients with substance abuse problems.

**Table 1** shows the distribution of FPs who indicated that they provided care for patients with addictions. It is evident that addictions know few boundaries and are prevalent across all kinds of practice populations, especially in rural and remote areas. Among the provinces (**Table 2**), the highest proportions of FPs caring for patients with addictions are reported in Saskatchewan (78%) and British Columbia (77%), while Quebec (54%) and Newfoundland (65%) have the lowest proportions.

**Table 1. Proportion of FPs who provide care for patients with addictions by practice population they serve**

PRACTICE POPULATION	FPS, %
Inner city	65
Urban or suburban	67
Small town	74
Rural	76
Isolated or remote	76
Other	60
Cannot identify	61
Total	69

**Table 2. Proportion of FPs providing care for patients with addictions, by province\***

PROVINCE	FPS PROVIDING CARE FOR PATIENTS WITH ADDICTIONS, %	FPS FOR WHOM PATIENTS WITH ADDICTIONS REPRESENT 10% OR MORE OF THE PATIENT POPULATION, %
Newfoundland	65	3
Prince Edward Island	76	4
Nova Scotia	74	3
New Brunswick	73	4
Quebec	54	3
Ontario	71	3
Manitoba	73	4
Saskatchewan	78	9
Alberta	74	5
British Columbia	77	6
Canada	69	4

\*Data for the Territories are not given owing to a small number of responses.

The important role that FPs play in substance abuse care should be recognized and further studied to ensure proper training and information are in place for physicians to provide the necessary care to the Canadian public.

The NPS is a collaborative project of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Additional results are available at [www.nationalphysicianssurvey.ca](http://www.nationalphysicianssurvey.ca). If you would like the opportunity to develop and write a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact **Artem Safarov**, National Physician Survey Project Manager, at 800 387-6197, extension 242, or [artem@cfpc.ca](mailto:artem@cfpc.ca).

## Reference

1. Veldhuizen S, Urbanoski K, Cairney J. Geographical variation in the prevalence of problematic substance use in Canada. *Can J Psychiatry* 2007;52(7):426-33.

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