Declining interest in family medicine as a career choice for medical students over the past 5 years has been of great concern to the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) and its members. A great deal of discussion, soul-searching, and strategizing has engaged the leaders of the CFPC, universities, communities, and governments. In 2004, the CFPC received funding from Health Canada to support 4 projects, 2 of which specifically target medical students and the undergraduate curriculum.

One project has supported establishment of a Family Medicine Interest Group (FMIG) in each of the medical schools. What started with the enthusiasm and extraordinary talent of a few committed medical students has grown into 17 FMIGs, each with its own activities and programs. Through the organizational support of the CFPC and the financial aid of Health Canada, leaders of all the FMIGs across the country have met twice at CFPC’s national office to share ideas and successes. In order to secure ongoing financial support, Dr Francine Lemire and Heather Zimcik (one of the cofounders of the University of Toronto FMIG) made a presentation to the Physician Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Health Delivery and Human Resources. At this time, several provincial governments, Health Canada, the CFPC, and our provincial Chapters appear to have agreed to continue to subsidize the FMIGs collaboratively. Some of these groups are also evaluating the effect of the FMIGs’ activities.

The second project has targeted the role of family medicine and family physicians in undergraduate curricula. This forum has allowed undergraduate educators in Canada to come together to share successful local initiatives, which include:

- setting medical school admissions policies,
- offering family medicine lectures and seminars in the preclinical years,
- allowing family medicine residents to act as teachers,
- developing career counseling and mentorship programs, and
- determining the length and content of the family medicine clerkship.

A final meeting was held at the end of March in which specific recommendations were made that departments of family medicine will use to collaborate with undergraduate offices within the faculties of medicine.

Already, the first sign that the tide is turning has appeared with the news that 30% of graduating medical students ranked family medicine as their first choice in the first iteration of the Canadian Resident Matching Service, up from 24% 3 years ago. We hope to build upon this indicator of success to reach a target of 40% to 45% to produce the number of family physicians needed in Canada.

I thank the medical student leaders, Dr Fraser Brenneis, and Drs Francine Lemire and Paul Rainsberry and their staffs for their invaluable work in leading these 2 projects.