

current Minister of Health and Social Services, Dr Yves Bolduc, ordered the 4 Quebec faculties of medicine to develop comprehensive action plans with the objective of inducing up to 45% (and perhaps eventually 50%) of our graduates to choose careers in family medicine—only time will judge our success.

—*Stephen DiTommaso MD FCFP*
Montreal, Que

Reference

1. Kredentser S. Marketing family medicine. *Can Fam Physician* 2009;55:669 (Eng), 670 (Fr).

Response

Dr DiTommaso is correct in identifying the inclusion of the Francophone Quebec faculties in the Canadian Resident Matching Service in 2006 as one of the factors leading to the increased percentage of first-year residents choosing family medicine as their first choice. Between 2000 and 2002, just below 30% of students chose family medicine first. This reached an all-time low in 2003 at 25%. Since then we have seen a gradual increase (with a slight dip in 2007). Even within medical schools, there has been substantial variability from year to year. Our challenge is to proactively develop strategies aimed at increasing the appeal of family medicine, and those strategies need to be implemented through all phases of the learning continuum.

—*Sarah Kredentser MD CCFP FCFP*
Winnipeg, Man

Maternal history

Dr Cameron's article "Nothing to do but wait" details a remarkable story of a home birth performed by Dr Charles Webster in 1892.¹ Beautifully written and including excerpts from Dr Webster's original account of the delivery, the story contains vivid imagery and highlights the physical as well as medical obstacles physicians faced in the late 19th century. The story concludes with the delivery of a stillborn child, along with some practical and medical lessons for physicians.

The epilogue of the article, however, presents cause for concern. A brief reference is made to a declining maternal mortality rate and an increased rate of women giving birth in hospital, suggesting that the shift from women giving birth at home to hospital resulted in reduced risk to the mother. Although this has in fact been the case over many years (the maternal mortality rate in Canada did in fact decrease from the late 19th century to the 1920s and the mid-20th century to present), linking this result to an increase in hospital births as opposed to home births is misleading. In fact, when women initially began giving birth in hospital the maternal mortality rate increased; it was not until great changes occurred to the practice of obstetrics in hospital that the rate declined,