




Current and expected use of EMRs

The implementation of electronic medical records (EMRs) in physicians' offices, replacing paper-based record-keeping systems, is a much studied topic in Canadian health care. There are many benefits to using the electronic record format: back-up copies are easily stored¹; there is better adherence to guideline-based care; and there are decision support functions within an EMR.² Arguments for reduced costs and improved quality and effectiveness of care have been made¹; however, according to a meta-analysis on this topic, the evidence of these positive effects is still limited.²

The limited data, in combination with restrictions due to funding, as well as a lack of overall standardization, both from the perspective of government requirements and information technology,³ have hindered EMRs from becoming the mainstream method of medical record-keeping in Canada. According to the results of the 2007 National Physician Survey (NPS), only 12.3% of Canadian FPs and GPs use EMRs exclusively, and an additional 19.4% use EMRs in combination with traditional paper-based charts.

From the NPS data (Figure 1), it is clear that younger physicians are more likely to adopt EMRs in their practices. Almost 44% of FPs and GPs younger than 35 years use EMRs, compared with 20% of physicians older than

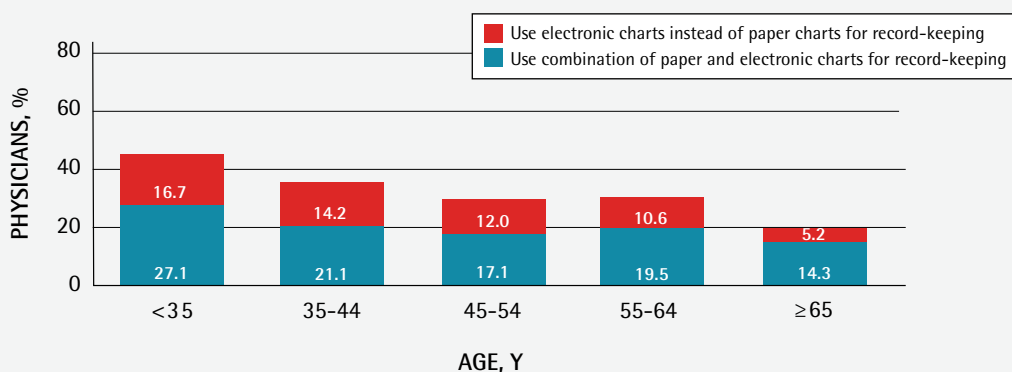
65 years and 30% of physicians between the ages of 55 and 64 years. Data from second-year family medicine residents show that 73% of them used or were exposed to EMRs as part of their clinical training; 75% expect to be using EMRs upon entering practice; and 61% agree that training for computer skills and clinical information retrieval should be a mandatory part of the medical residency curriculum.

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.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca. If you would like the opportunity to develop and write a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact **Harleen Sahota**, National Physician Survey Project Manager, at 800 387-6197, extension 416, or hs@cfpc.ca. 

References

1. Canada Health Infoway [website]. *EHRs for physicians*. Toronto, ON: Canada Health Infoway; 2009. Available from: www.infoway-inforoute.ca. Accessed 2009 Nov 6.
2. Chaudhry B, Wang J, Wu S, Maglione M, Mojica W, Roth E, et al. Systematic review: impact of health information technology on quality, efficiency, and costs of medical care. *Ann Intern Med* 2006;144(10):742-52. Epub 2006 Apr 11.
3. Health Canada [website]. *Toward electronic health records*. Ottawa, ON: Health Canada; 2001. Available from: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/pubs/ehealth-esante/2001-towards-vers-ehr-dse/index-eng.php. Accessed 2009 Dec 1.

Figure 1. Percentage of FPs and GPs who use EMRs, by age*



EMR—electronic medical record.

*The responding sample has been weighted to represent the population.