

Family medicine residents: baseline measurements

As the new Triple C family medicine (FM) curriculum is being implemented in Canadian medical schools, it is valuable to have a baseline measurement of several important variables that can later be used to gauge the effect of the new curriculum. This Fast Fact summarizes data received from FM residents in the first half of their second year, collected in the 2004, 2007, and 2010 editions of the National Physician Survey (NPS).

The mean age of second-year FM residents continued to decrease, from 31.5 years in 2004 to 31.0 years in 2007, and 30.2 years in 2010. In 2010, second-year FM residents were more likely to be women (69%), which was substantially more than the proportion of female residents in other specialties (43%). However, the proportion of male FM residents increased from 27% in 2007 to 31% in 2010, although it remained lower than the 2004 proportion of men (36%). While the general satisfaction with their residency training remained largely positive, with 78% of second-year FM residents indicating that they were satisfied or very satisfied in 2010, their level of satisfaction decreased slightly from 2004 and 2007, when 81% and 82%, respectively, indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their residency programs (Table 1).

Table 1. Overall satisfaction with residency program

SATISFACTION LEVEL	YEAR OF SURVEY		
	2004	2007	2010
Satisfied or very satisfied, %	81	82	78
Neutral, %	10	10	12
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, %	9	3	9

Their ratings of the balance achieved between the academic and clinical components of their training improved in 2010, with 66% of second-year FM residents agreeing that such a balance was achieved, compared with 2004, when only 53% of the second-year residents agreed with this assessment (Table 2).

Table 2. Agreement with the statement of balance between academic and clinical components of residency

LEVEL OF AGREEMENT	YEAR OF SURVEY		
	2004	2007	2010
Agree or strongly agree, %	53	61	66
Neutral, %	19	18	17
Disagree or strongly disagree, %	23	15	12

Most second-year FM residents believed themselves to be adequately prepared to deal with commonly encountered medical problems. However, in relation to being prepared to deal with less common life-threatening emergencies, in 2010, fewer residents reported having received the skills or knowledge to deal with these problems than in 2007 (Table 3). (Note that these questions were not asked in 2004.)

Table 3. Does residency provide you with the skills or knowledge to deal with the following?

KNOWLEDGE OR SKILL	YEAR OF SURVEY	
	2007	2010
Skill to deal with range of common problems, %	86	86
Knowledge to deal with range of common problems, %	90	89
Skill to deal with less common life-threatening emergencies, %	60	56
Knowledge to deal with less common life-threatening emergencies, %	79	70

In 2010, most second-year FM residents (81%) planned to practise as family physicians on completion of their residency, and 32% intended to further specialize in FM. These proportions remained fairly consistent since 2004 (Table 4).

Table 4. Plans for future practice

FUTURE PRACTICE	YEAR OF SURVEY		
	2004	2007	2010
Practise as a family physician or general practitioner, %	81	80	81
Specialize in an area of family medicine, %	31	33	32

The upcoming 2012 NPS will once again go out to all Canadian medical residents, giving us an opportunity to evaluate the effect of changes being introduced into postgraduate medical education.

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 **Artem Safarov**, National Physician Survey Project Manager, at 800 387-6197, extension 242, or artem@cfpc.ca. 🌿