

# Access to advanced diagnostic services

Advanced diagnostic tests, such as magnetic resonance imaging and especially computed tomographic scans, play an important role in diagnosing traumatic brain injuries. In previous years, access to such specialized diagnostic services was deemed a problem area within the Canadian health care system, largely owing to long wait times to access the necessary equipment.<sup>1</sup>

It is encouraging to hear that, according to National Physician Survey (NPS) data, the substantial investments in this area are beginning to have an effect. Advanced diagnostic services are rated by FPs and GPs as being increasingly accessible. The proportion of physicians rating access as “poor” has decreased from 37% in 2004 to 19% in 2010, while the proportion of those rating access as “excellent” or “very good” climbed from 9% in 2004 to 19% in 2010 (Figure 1).

It is important to note that the 2010 ratings are not any lower among physicians providing care in rural and isolated settings. Only 15% of those physicians rate their access as “poor,” while 21% rate it as “excellent” or “very good.”

Regionally, Manitoba (29%) and New Brunswick (25%) had the highest proportion of physicians rating

their access to advanced diagnostic services as “excellent” or “very good.” British Columbia (32%) and Saskatchewan (30%) had the highest proportion of physicians rating their access to these services as “poor” (Figure 1).

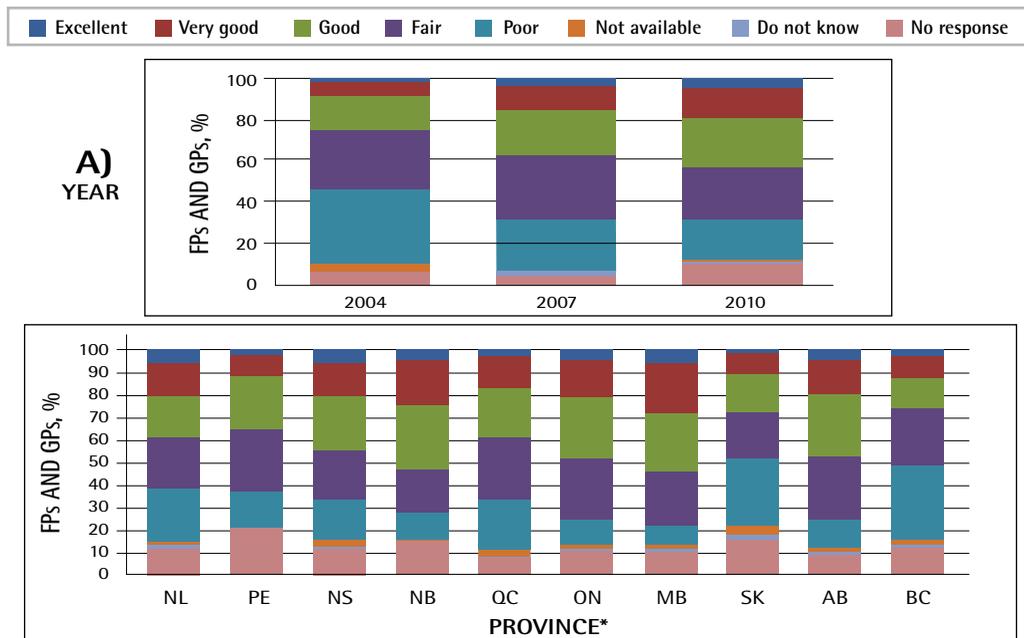
However, despite the steadily increasing accessibility rating, there is still room for improvement. Nationally, 19% of physicians still rate their access as “poor” and 26% as “fair.” Further efforts are required to make these procedures even more available to Canadians.

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](http://www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca). If you would like the opportunity to develop a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact Artem Safarov, National Physician Survey Project Manager, at 800 387-6197, extension 242, or [asafarov@cfpc.ca](mailto:asafarov@cfpc.ca).

**Reference**

1. Sanmartin C, Houle C, Berthelot JM, White K. *Access to health care services in Canada, 2001*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada; 2002. Available from: <http://publications.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/82-575-X/82-575-XIE2002001.pdf>. Accessed 2012 Feb 2.

**Figure 1. Proportion of FPs and GPs rating their access to advanced diagnostic services (eg, MRI, CT): A) By year, B) by province.**



CT—computed tomography, MRI—magnetic resonance imaging.  
 \*Data for the Territories are not given owing to small sample size.