



**Society of Rural Physicians of Canada
Société de la médecine rurale du Canada**

PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Report “Spun” Against Rural Hospitals

SHAWVILLE QC /June 15th, 2005/ - The headlines scream “Mortality Rate Lower in Higher–Volume Hospitals” – *It’s not true*. Unlike other countries where a number of types of surgery were found to be done better in larger hospitals, a highly publicized Canadian study showed only three rare and highly specialized procedures are better done in high volume centers. In six other highly specialized operations there was no difference in Canada.

Other studies have shown that common procedures such as appendectomy and maternity are actually done as well or better in rural hospitals closer to where patients live.

Dr Trina Larsen Soles, president of the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada says “Rural hospitals are already specialized in providing a wide range of basic medical and surgical procedures in this country and provide care of the highest standard. The good news is that we now know that even for many highly specialized surgeries most Canadians do not need to travel to get the best possible care.” Care closer to home can save time, money and lives by avoiding lengthy transport.

Canada, despite its large rural expanses, has significantly centralized medical services, with many hospital, service and bed closures. By example carotid endarterectomy (one of the procedures studied that did not show a significant effect of volume) is done in only 58 of our remaining 744 hospitals. In some jurisdictions, such as New Brunswick and Scotland, there has been a backlash against reduction in access to services.

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Backgrounder

Maternity Care and Low Volume Hospitals

Maternity care has been found to be as safe in smaller rural hospitals as in large specialist run centers in Northern Ontario. American studies show that if women have to travel to give birth, costs are higher and results worse. Due to the evidence of safer local access three large medical organisations joined in issuing a statement on the need for rural maternity care in Canada with and without local caesarean capability.

<http://www.cfpc.ca/English/cfpc/programs/patient%20care/maternity/rural%20maternity/default.asp?s=1>

Appendectomies and Low Volume Hospitals

Appendectomies done in Western Canada done by GP's in rural communities had slightly less complications than those done in city hospitals.

<http://www.cfpc.ca/cfp/2003/Mar/vol49-mar-research-3.asp>

Response to Regionalisation in Scotland

In Scotland the promise of centralisation, nurse practitioners, enhanced ambulance transport, and telemedicine to improve access to health services has broken on the black granite reality of rural regions of Western Isles, Orkney, Shetland, Wick, Oban, Fort William. The populace didn't like words replacing services, and 2,000 marched on the Scot legislature to protest downgrading of a maternity unit. The Kerr commission of inquiry has reported last month that the NHS should reverse centralism and to manage care as close to where the patient is as possible. This should take place with greater emphasis on local delivery through "Rural General Hospitals" staffed by generalists.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/05/23141307/13135>

CIHI Study on Hospital Volumes and Procedures

CIHI studied nine highly specialised procedures that American work showed volume dependence in their health care system. The CIHI study is at

http://secure.cihi.ca/cihiweb/products/hcic2005_e.pdf

About the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada

The Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (SRPC) is the national voice of Canadian rural physicians. Founded in 1992, the SRPC's mission is to provide leadership for rural physicians and to promote sustainable conditions and equitable health care for rural communities.

On behalf of its members and the Canadian public, SRPC performs a wide variety of functions, such as developing and advocating health delivery mechanisms, supporting rural doctors and communities in crisis, promoting and delivering rural medical education, encouraging and facilitating research into rural health issues, and fostering communication among rural physicians and other groups with an interest in rural health care.

The SRPC is a voluntary professional organization representing two thousand of Canada's rural physicians and comprising 5 regional divisions spanning the country reference <http://www.srpc.ca>