

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Rural Doctors Call for Better Rural Health

SHAWVILLE QC /July 5th, 2010/ - Today a study published in the Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine, found that one in 7 (14%) of rural physicians planned to move from their communities within the next 2 years. Given that we already know that physicians are under-represented in rural communities, this finding risks making a bad situation worse.

Society of Rural Physicians (SRPC) President, Dr. John Wootton, said "Canadians living in rural and remote areas are the mainstay of our country's resource producing economy, and deserve equitable access to health care." The studies' authors reported that the rural doctors might stay if they had a more reasonable workload, and professional backup.

Dr. Wootton outlined a number of specific SRPC suggestions on how Canada and the provinces can do better to address rural Canada's needs.

The federal government can introduce measures to increase the number of students from rural Canada in medical school. Most current medical students come from affluent and urban backgrounds and most will choose specialty practice in the cities. Rural origin medical students are much more likely to enter into rural medical practice while only one in twenty origin students do so.

"This survey shows that while a wide array of incentives are being used to attract physicians to rural areas, more consideration needs to be paid to the factors that will encourage them to remain there," said Dr. Anne Doig, President of the Canadian Medical Association.

The study also found that the opportunity to provide comprehensive care and practise the full set of skill for which they have been trained is one of the things which attracts generalist physicians to rural Canada. By supporting generalist training and providing communities with local hospital services, provincial governments can create conditions to encourage more physicians to enter rural practice. Further programs are however needed for those who need special training in surgery, maternity care, anaesthesia, endoscopy, cardiac care, geriatric care, aboriginal health and others areas.

These suggestions are consistent with the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health in their recently published report on finding solutions to HHR issues within the health system.¹

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¹ "Promoting Innovative Solutions to Health Human Resources Challenges", Report of the Standing Committee on Health, June 2010.