



Physicians in Canada, 2014

Summary Report

September 2015

Spending and Health Workforce



Canadian Institute
for Health Information

Institut canadien
d'information sur la santé



Our Vision

Better data. Better decisions.
Healthier Canadians.

Our Mandate

To lead the development and maintenance of comprehensive and integrated health information that enables sound policy and effective health system management that improve health and health care.

Our Values

Respect, Integrity, Collaboration,
Excellence, Innovation

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Highlights

This report contains information on the supply of physicians in Canada, as well as on service utilization and payments administered through the provincial and territorial medical care plans. Data on the supply, demographics and mobility of physicians is as of December 2014. The service utilization and payments data is for fiscal year 2013–2014.

For the eighth year in a row, the number of physicians per population increased, and the number of physicians increased at a considerably faster rate than the population did.

- In 2014, there were more than 79,000 physicians in Canada, representing a 2.9% increase over 2013.
- Between 2010 and 2014, growth in the number of physicians outpaced population growth threefold, resulting in 224 physicians per 100,000 population in 2014.
- Based solely on the number of MD degrees currently being awarded by Canadian universities, the number of physicians is expected to continue to increase for the next several years.¹

The number of women in the physician workforce continues to rise, particularly among family physicians.

- Between 2010 and 2014, the number of female physicians increased by 23.7%, while the number of male physicians increased by 9.5%.
- By specialty, 43.8% of family medicine physicians and 34.0% of specialists were women in 2014. Across all provinces, women represented a larger proportion of family medicine physicians than of specialists.

Clinical payments to physicians increased almost 6% over the previous year.

- In 2013–2014, total clinical payments to physicians increased 5.7% over the previous year to almost \$24.1 billion; this is after clinical payments had had the lowest increase in a decade the previous year (3.6% in 2012–2013).
- The average gross clinical payment per physician increased 2.4% over 2012–2013 to \$336,000, after a year when it had remained virtually unchanged. The average gross clinical payment per physician ranged from \$263,000 in Nova Scotia to \$368,000 in Ontario.

Consultations and visits made up the majority of both services and payments.

- In 2013–2014, fee-for-service payments to physicians for clinical services were approximately \$15.5 billion. Consultations and visits accounted for 72% of services and 66% of payments to physicians, while procedures accounted for 28% of services and 34% of payments.
- In 2013–2014, the average cost per service paid to physicians was \$59.91. Family physicians billed an average cost per service of \$43.72, while specialists received an average of \$80.78 per service.

More information

The following companion products to the *Physicians in Canada, 2014: Summary Report* are available on CIHI's website at www.cihi.ca/hr:

- *Physicians in Canada, 2014: Chartbook* (.pptx)
- *Supply, Distribution and Migration of Physicians in Canada, 2014: Data Tables* (.xlsx)
- *Supply, Distribution and Migration of Physicians in Canada, 2014: Methodological Notes* (.pdf)
- *National Physician Database Data Release, 2013–2014: Data Tables* (.xlsx)
- *National Physician Database Data Release, 2013–2014: Methodological Notes* (.pdf)
- *Physician Services Benefit Rates Report, 2013–2014* (.pdf)

The following Health Human Resources (HHR) product is also available at www.cihi.ca/hr:

- *Regulated Nurses, 2014*

Feedback and questions are welcome at hhr@cihi.ca.

About CIHI's physician data

Collecting and reporting physician information assists decision-makers in the planning, distribution and funding of physicians. Information on the supply, distribution and migration of physicians from the data sources used in this report has been collected since 1970, and information on physician service utilization and payments has been collected since 1989. The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) has collected this information since its inception in 1994.

Starting in 2014, CIHI merged data from its 2 physician databases into 1 report. This provides readers with 1 set of documents for all physician-related data on the supply of physicians, their payments and the services they provide. The report includes a series of related products:

- A summary report on physician supply, distribution, migration, payment and utilization information;
- Data tables in Excel to enable readers to conduct their own analyses; and
- Graphs in PowerPoint so readers can grab and go.

To ensure that our work reflects priority needs, we invite our readers to join the discussion using CIHI's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/CIHI.ICIS), Twitter account (twitter.com/CIHI_ICIS) or email (physicians@cihi.ca).

Any questions regarding this publication should be directed to

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Notes to readers

This report contains information on the supply of physicians in Canada as well as on their service utilization and payments that are administered through the provincial and territorial medical care plans. Data on the supply, demographics and mobility of physicians is as of December 2014. The service utilization and payments data is for fiscal year 2013–2014.

Report summary

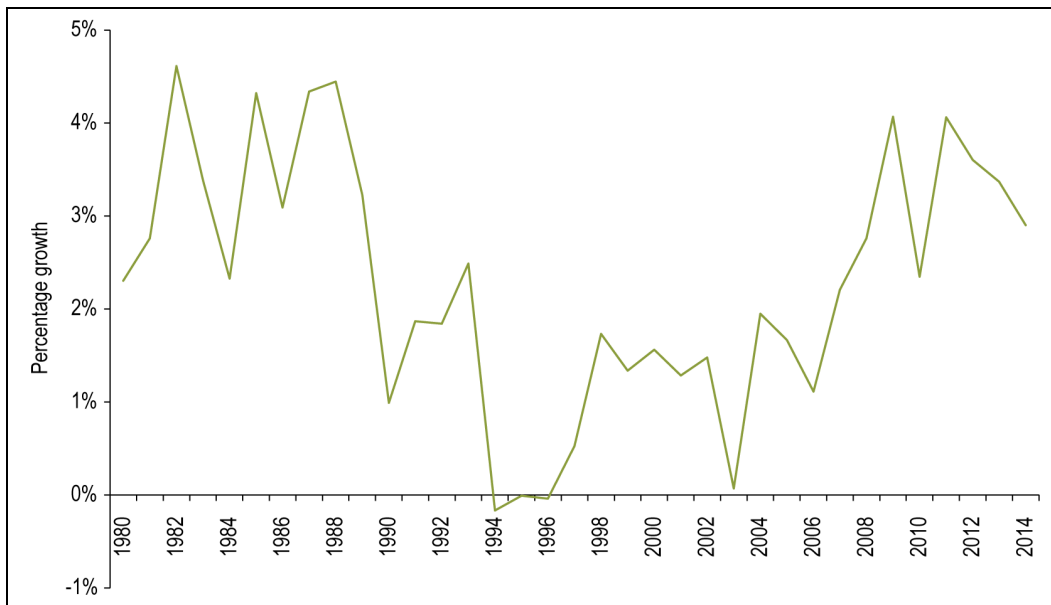
How many physicians are there in Canada?

2014 saw the highest number of physicians ever recorded in Canada, and the increases are likely to continue.

- In 2014, there were 79,905 physicians in Canada, representing an increase of 2.9% over the previous year.

Looking back, Canada has sustained yearly physician increases of more than 2% since 2007, with increases of more than 4% in 2009 and 2011. These increases are reminiscent of the 1980s, which also saw large yearly increases (ranging from 2.3% to 4.6%) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage growth in the supply of physicians, Canada, 1980 to 2014



Source

Scott's Medical Database, 2014, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

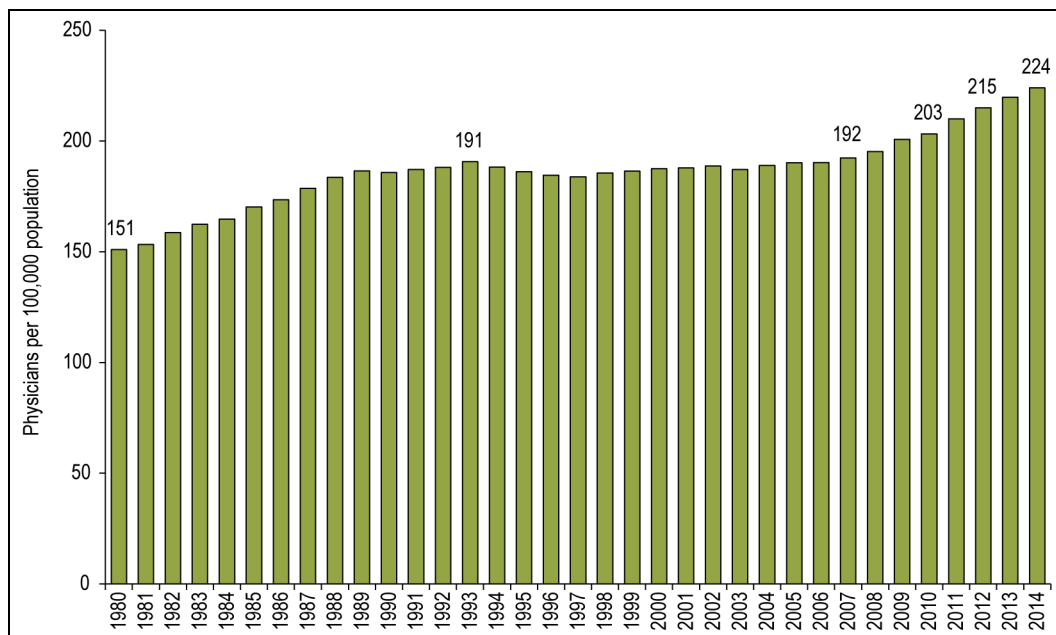
- In 2014, all provinces and territories except Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Manitoba reported an increase in the number of physicians, with Nunavut,ⁱ Yukon and Alberta reporting the largest increases (9.1%, 7.5% and 5.5%, respectively). Jurisdictions reporting smaller increases included New Brunswick (0.7%) and Quebec (1.8%).
- Based solely on the number of MD degrees awarded by Canadian universities, the number of physicians is likely to continue to increase.
 - In 2014, Canadian universities awarded 2,804 MD degrees, representing an increase of 5.5% from the previous year.¹ Between 2010 and 2014, the number of MD degrees awarded in Canada overall increased by 14.5%.

i. Interpret findings for Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut with caution, as the territories rely heavily on physicians who work on temporary arrangements to provide care, and these physicians are not included in our numbers.

Over the past 5 years (2010 to 2014), the number of physicians increased at a considerably faster rate than the population did, resulting in more physicians per population than ever before (see Figure 2). In 2014, there were 224 physicians per 100,000 population.

- The Canadian population increased by 4.1% between 2010 and 2014, while the physician population increase was 14.6% — more than 3 times the Canadian population increase.
- Across all provinces,ⁱⁱ except Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Manitoba, the physician-per-population ratio in 2014 was the highest ever recorded. Provinces with the highest ratios included Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec (260, 248 and 239 physicians per 100,000 population, respectively).

Figure 2: Number of physicians per 100,000 population, Canada, 1980 to 2014



Source
Scott's Medical Database, 2014, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

Nationally, the proportions of family medicine and specialist physicians were relatively equal, with family medicine physicians representing between 50% and 53% of the physician workforce since the late 1970s.

- In 2014, family medicine physicians represented 51.0% of the physician workforce in Canada and approximately half of the physician workforce in each province,ⁱⁱ ranging from 55.8% in Saskatchewan to 49.3% in Quebec.

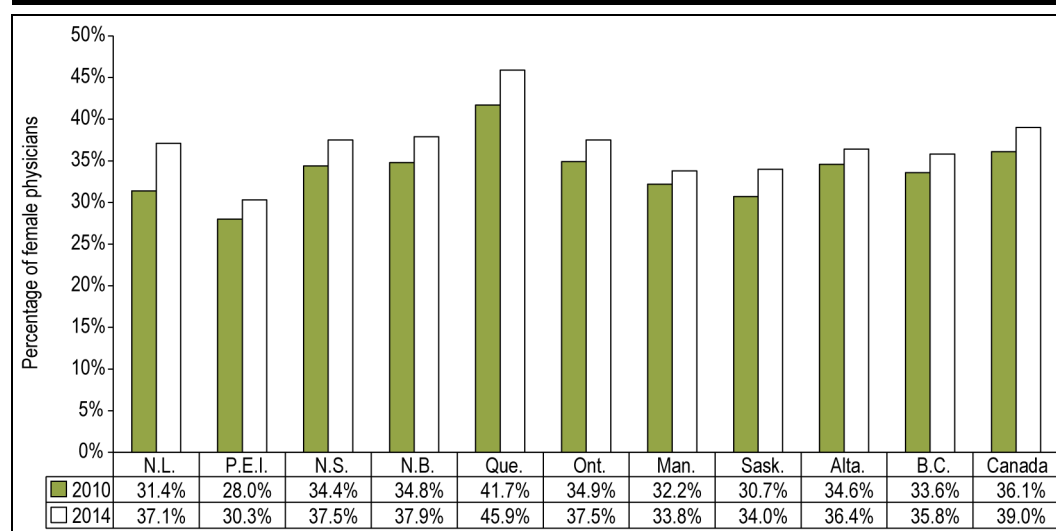
ii. The territories were excluded from this analysis due to small numbers.

What are the demographic profiles of the Canadian physician workforce?

In 2014, almost 40% of Canada's physicians were women (39.0%); the proportion was higher among family medicine physicians (43.8%) and younger physicians (53% of those younger than age 40).

- Between 2010 and 2014, the number of female physicians increased by 23.7%, while the number of male physicians increased by 9.5%. By 2014, a total of 39.0% of physicians were women, compared with 36.1% in 2010.
- Quebec and New Brunswick had the highest proportion of women in their physician workforces overall (45.9% and 37.9%, respectively),ⁱⁱⁱ while Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Saskatchewan reported the lowest percentages of women in their physician workforces (30.3%, 33.8% and 34.0%, respectively) (see Figure 3).
- Across all provinces, women represented a larger proportion of family medicine physicians than of specialists. In 2014, women accounted for 43.8% of family medicine physicians and 34.0% of specialists.
- In 2014, 53% of physicians younger than 40 were women — 62.9% of younger physicians in Quebec. Females represented more than half of younger physicians from Ontario eastward. West of Ontario, female physicians represented between 43.9% (in Manitoba) and 49.7% (in British Columbia) of all physicians younger than 40.ⁱⁱⁱ

Figure 3: Percentage of female physicians, by jurisdiction, 2010 and 2014



Source

Scott's Medical Database, 2014, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

iii. The territories were excluded from this analysis due to small numbers.

The average age of physicians has remained relatively stable over the past 5 years (50.0 in 2010 and 50.1 in 2014). The increasing number of younger physicians entering the workforce is influencing this trend.

- On average, family medicine physicians were 49.9 years old in 2014, while specialists were 50.4.
 - Across jurisdictions, the average age of physicians ranged from 47.8 to 53.0. Physicians in Newfoundland and Labrador and Alberta were the youngest (average age of 47.8 and 47.9, respectively), while physicians in Prince Edward Island, Ontario and British Columbia were the oldest (average age of 53.0, 51.1 and 51.1, respectively).^{iv}
 - The average age of female physicians was 46.1 and the average age of male physicians was 52.7.
- Across Canada, about equal proportions of the workforce were younger than age 40 or age 60 and older (24.5% and 25.2%, respectively).
 - Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and Saskatchewan had the highest proportion of physicians younger than 40 (30.6%, 30.2% and 29.7% respectively) and the smallest proportion of physicians age 60 and older (19.3%, 19.8% and 20.8%, respectively). Conversely, P.E.I. had an older workforce, with 14.6% of physicians younger than 40 and 30.1% of physicians 60 and older.^{iv}

Approximately one-quarter (25.5%) of Canada's physicians received their MD degree outside of Canada.

- In 2014, 28.5% of Canada's family medicine physicians and 22.5% of specialists received their MD degrees outside of Canada.
- The percentage of physicians in Canada who were trained internationally has increased slightly in recent years, from 24.4% in 2010 to 25.5% in 2014.
- Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador and Manitoba had the largest proportions of internationally trained physicians in their physician workforces (53.2%, 36.4% and 34.3%, respectively), while Quebec and P.E.I.^{iv} had the smallest (10.2% and 18.3%, respectively).

What are the migration patterns of physicians?

Migration patterns suggest that Canada is gaining more physicians from international migration than it is losing. Meanwhile, the number of physicians migrating between jurisdictions in Canada has remained relatively constant.

- In 2014, more physicians returned from abroad than moved abroad, resulting in a net gain of 10 physicians from international migration.
- Within Canada, 755 physicians moved from one province/territory to another, representing 0.9% of the physician workforce.
 - Since the late 1970s, approximately 1% of physicians have moved between jurisdictions each year.²

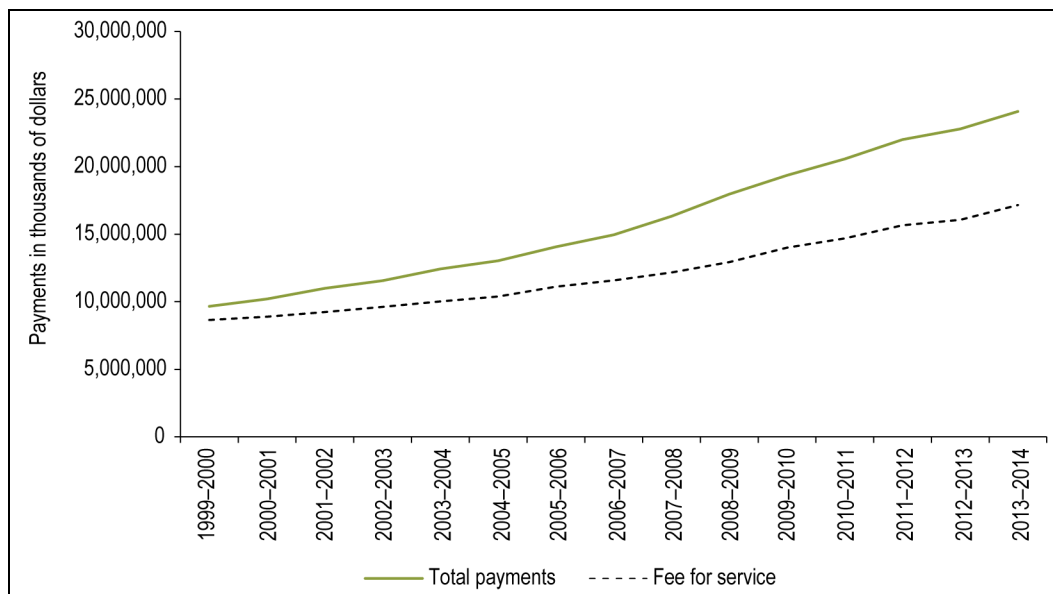
iv. The territories were excluded from this analysis due to small numbers.

How much are physicians paid?

The cost of physician services in Canada can be understood by examining total and average payments to physicians, the types of services paid for, and who the providers and recipients of these services were.

Gross clinical payments to physicians reached \$24.1 billion in 2013–2014 (see Figure 4), an increase of 5.7% over the previous year, which had the lowest increase since CIHI started collecting aggregate alternative payments data in 1999–2000.

Figure 4: Total and fee-for-service clinical payments to physicians, 1999–2000 to 2013–2014



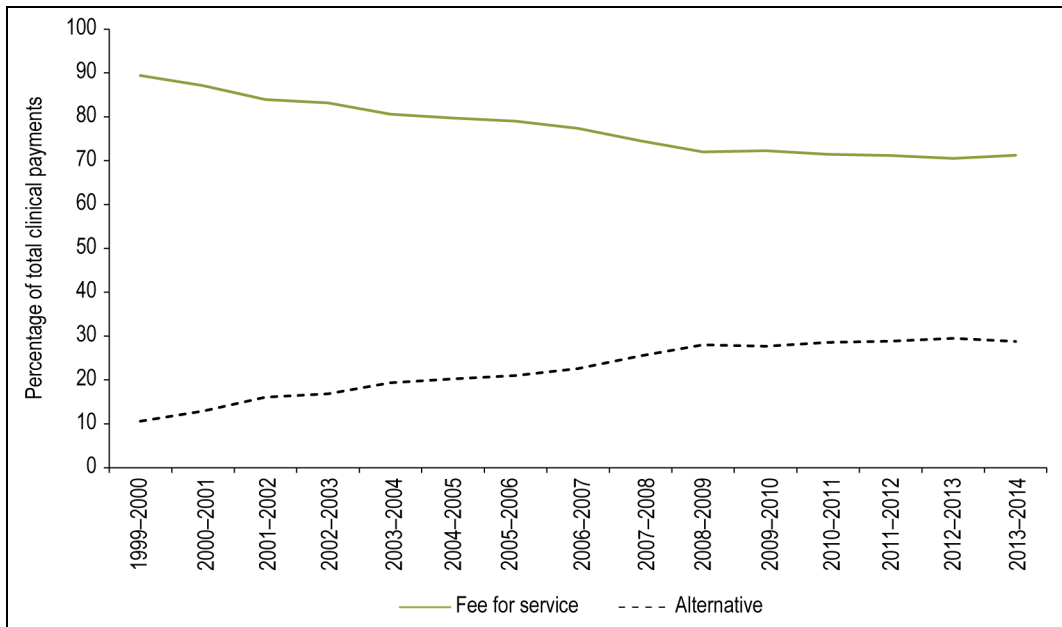
Source

National Physician Database, 2013, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

Historically, physicians have been remunerated for clinical services primarily through fee-for-service systems. Over time, there has been a growing shift toward alternative payment plans in place of fee-for-service payments. However, this trend appears to have stabilized: from 2008–2009 to 2013–2014, fee-for-service payments remained between 71% and 72% of total clinical payments (see Figure 5).

- In 1999–2000, alternative payments totalled \$1.0 billion and made up 10.6% of total gross clinical payments. By 2013–2014, alternative payments had reached more than \$6.9 billion, which accounted for more than one-quarter (28.8%) of all clinical payments.

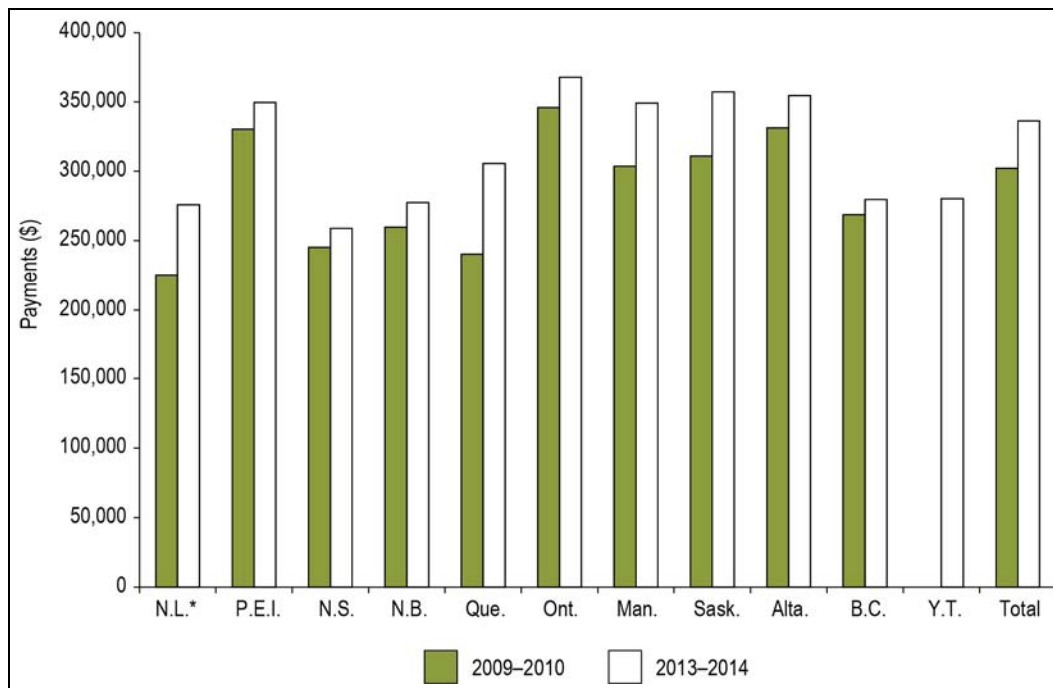
Figure 5: Fee-for-service and alternative payments as a percentage of total clinical payments to physicians, 1999–2000 to 2013–2014



Source
National Physician Database, 2013, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

As total clinical payments have risen, physicians have been earning more on average. In 2013–2014, the average gross clinical payment per physician was just less than \$336,000, an increase of 2.4% from the previous year, which had an average payment that was virtually unchanged from the year before. The average gross clinical payment per physician ranged from \$263,000 in Nova Scotia to \$368,000 in Ontario. Over the past 5 years, average gross payments to physicians have increased 11.1% (from \$302,000 to \$336,000) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Average gross clinical payments to physicians, 2009–2010 and 2013–2014^v



Note

* Data for Newfoundland and Labrador is not finalized and should be considered preliminary.

Source

National Physician Database, 2013, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

What is the average cost per service?

Fee-for-service payments (\$17.1 billion) accounted for 71% of the \$24.1 billion in gross clinical payments. These payments can be analyzed to determine which types of services physicians are providing, who is providing them and who is receiving them.

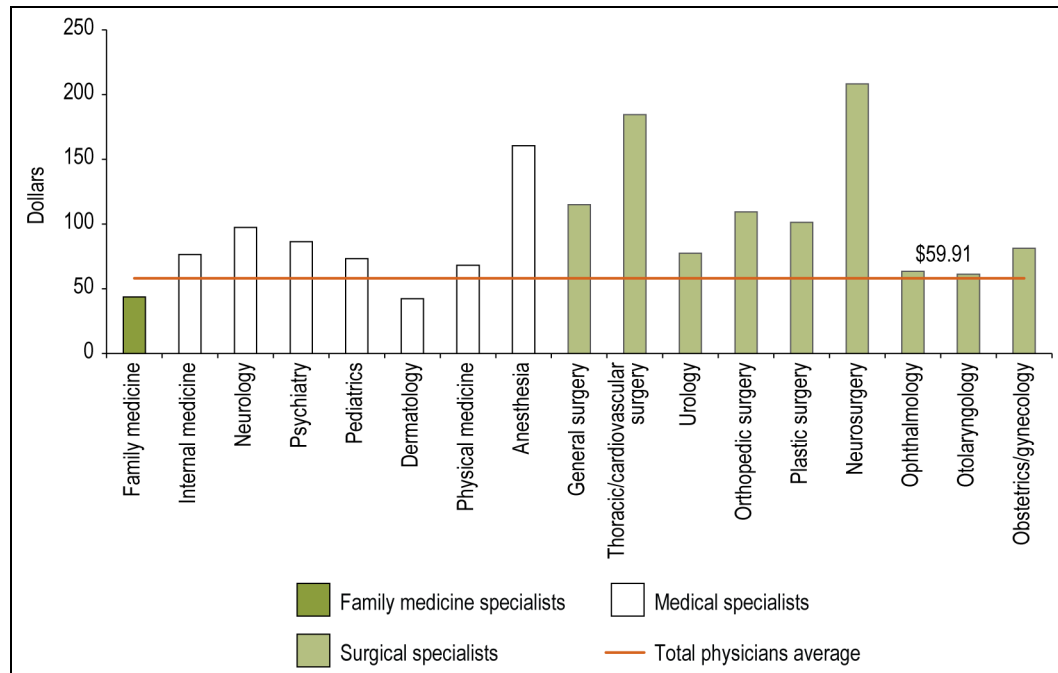
Provincial/territorial medical care plans paid out \$15.5 billion in fee-for-service payments for the 259.4 million clinical services that were provided in 2013–2014. Excluded are alternative payments, reciprocal billing, imaging and laboratory services, anesthesia services and anesthesiology specialists, and unclassified physicians.

- Services provided by physicians can be split into 2 distinct types: consultations/visits and procedures. Consultations and visits accounted for the majority of services (72%) and payments (66%) in 2013–2014.
- The average cost per service paid to physicians was \$59.91. Family physicians billed an average cost per service of \$43.72, while medical and surgical specialists received an average of \$77.41 and \$85.95 per service, respectively.

v. Due to the greater proportion of short-term, visiting and locum physicians and their lower associated payments in certain smaller jurisdictions relative to larger ones, in an attempt to improve comparability, CIHI has agreed to calculate the average payment per physician using only permanent in-province physicians in P.E.I. and physicians whose total gross payments are at least \$60,000 in Yukon (2009–2010 not reported).

Although family medicine physicians perform the greatest number of services and receive the largest proportion of payments, medical and surgical specialists are paid more per service on average. However, services may not always be comparable, as the amount of work required differs depending on the type of service. Figure 7 highlights the average cost per service across the different specialities.

Figure 7: Average cost per fee-for-service services by specialty, 2013–2014



Source
National Physician Database, 2013, Canadian Institute for Health Information.

References

1. Office of Research and Information Services, Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada. *Canadian Medical Education Statistics 2014*. 2014.
2. Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Supply, Distribution and Migration of Canadian Physicians, 2008*. 2009.

Production of this document is made possible by financial contributions from Health Canada and provincial and territorial governments. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada or any provincial or territorial government.

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ISBN 978-1-77109-396-5 (PDF)

© 2015 Canadian Institute for Health Information

How to cite this document:

Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Physicians in Canada, 2014: Summary Report*. Ottawa, ON: CIHI; 2015.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Les médecins au Canada 2014 : rapport sommaire*.

ISBN 978-1-77109-397-2 (PDF)

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