

NPS Primer: Impediments to Care

The NPS is Canada's largest census survey, with nearly 20,000 family physicians and other specialists participating in the 2007 cycle. This ongoing research project is produced by the Royal College, the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Canadian Medical Association.

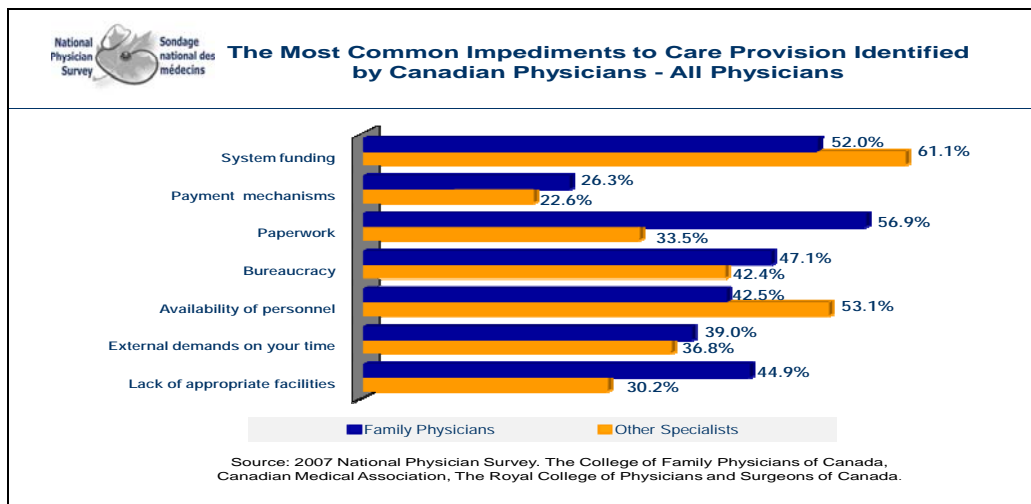
This NPS Primer focuses on impediments to care. These findings shed some light on the barriers reported by physicians that hinder their ability to provide care to their patients.

Overview of responses

Family physicians and other specialists identified several impediments to their provision of care in the 2007 NPS, including:

- system funding;
- availability of personnel;
- lack of appropriate facilities to care for complex/elderly/failing patients;
- external demands on the physician's time;
- payment mechanisms;
- paperwork; and
- bureaucracy.

More family physicians regarded lack of appropriate facilities, external demands on the physician's time, payment mechanisms, paperwork, and bureaucracy as impediments to care than other specialists. Conversely, other specialists had a higher response to system funding and availability of personnel as impediments to care than family physicians.



Differences among specialists by jurisdictions within Canada

With the exception of paperwork, specialists in Quebec more than any other jurisdiction within Canada reported that the above indicators constituted impediments to care. Specialists in other

jurisdictions ranked certain impediments higher than the total percentage ranking for all jurisdictions. Overall, system funding and availability of personnel ranked the highest and second highest respectively.

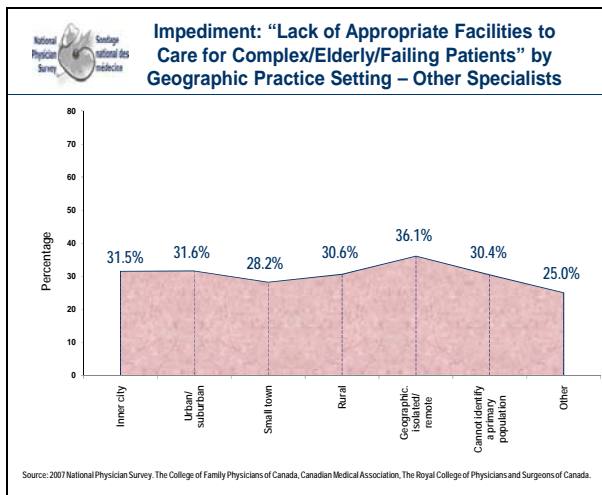
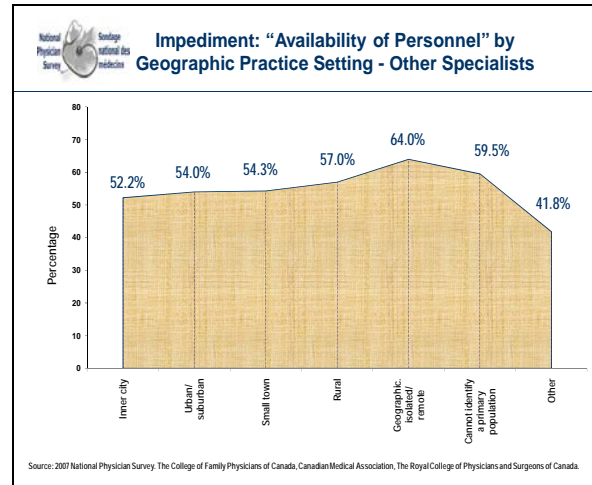
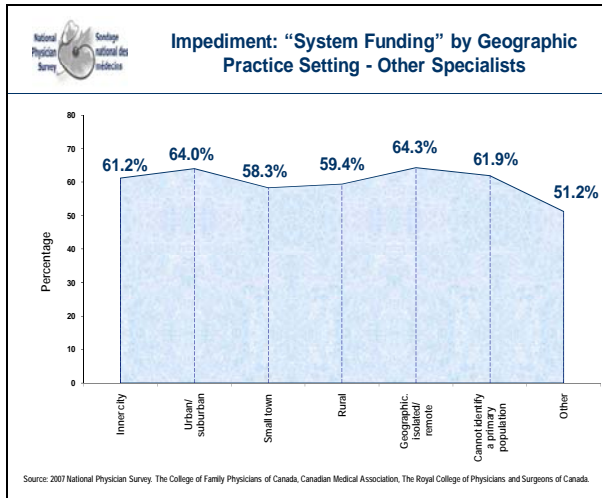
Impediments to care: responses by specialists across jurisdictions within Canada												
Indicator	NL	PEI	NS	NB	QC	ON	MB	SK	AB	BC	N/Y/N	TOTAL
System funding	50.8	43.8	61.0	47.0	70.5	58.1	52.0	51.3	57.2	62.9	53.1	61.1
Payment mechanisms	15.0	12.5	18.3	11.7	29.7	22.1	17.2	10.3	21.6	18.7	0	22.6
Paperwork	36.4	28.1	25.8	31.3	30.8	37.2	34.3	35.0	33.1	29.6	13.3	33.5
Bureaucracy	33.3	46.9	41.3	43.3	51.2	37.5	43.5	41.2	42.8	41.1	46.9	42.4
Availability of personnel	55.6	53.1	55.2	61.7	66.0	43.9	51.9	54.2	61.2	48.1	73.5	53.1
External demands	30.9	34.4	31.1	33.2	36.8	38.6	40.4	36.5	40.8	30.5	39.8	36.8
Lack of appropriate facilities	32.0	21.9	35.2	31.9	32.3	28.3	25.0	31.5	28.9	32.4	13.3	30.2

*Shaded areas indicate responses within jurisdictions that surpass the percentages for total responses across jurisdictions

Differences among specialists by geographic setting of care

Although it's been thought that specialists in urban/suburban settings faced fewer impediments to care, the NPS shows differently. Surprisingly, results for specialists working in small towns were

similar or lower than results for their inner city and urban/suburban colleagues (Results for system funding, availability of personnel and lack of appropriate facilities are shown below.)



Differences among specialists by sex

The NPS also shows notable ranking differences based on sex for the following impediments: paperwork, availability of personnel, and external demands on the physician's time.

Impediments to care: Specialist responses by sex		
Indicator	M	F
System funding	61.5	60.8
Payment mechanisms	23.0	21.9
Paperwork	31.1	39.2
Bureaucracy	43.6	39.5
Availability of personnel	51.4	57.3
External demands	35.1	41.2
Lack of appropriate facilities	29.8	31.5

*Shaded areas indicate a difference in response by sex of +5%.

Differences among specialists by age

Compared to their colleagues aged 55+, more specialists age <55 almost always reported that the above impediments were greater barriers to care. Exceptions are specialists aged <35 for external demands on their time and lack of appropriate facilities, and specialists 45-54 for bureaucracy.

Impediments to care: Specialist responses by age					
Indicator	<35	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
System funding	68.1	66.1	64.9	58.4	43.3
Payment mech.	25.1	24.7	23.9	21.7	16.0
Paperwork	36.9	36.3	34.1	31.3	27.7
Bureaucracy	49.4	43.5	42.4	42.5	36.2
Avail. of pers.	61.4	60.0	57.0	49.4	32.3
External dem.	34.9	42.7	40.4	33.3	23.2
Lack/ app. fac.	29.5	30.9	31.5	31.6	23.5

The need for further research

Some differences in responses among specialists are more understandable, e.g., external demands as constituting a greater impediment to care for female specialists given the significant impact of parental responsibility on these providers (see NPS Primer:

Work Hours, available at:

http://rcpsc.medical.org/publicpolicy/nps_workhours_e.pdf.

Other differences in response based on sex, as well as those based on geographic setting and also age, require further research.