



Statement on the Value of Family Physicians

Family physicians are highly skilled generalists, leaders, advocates, teachers, and researchers who adapt to the needs of their patients and community.

Family physicians are family medicine specialists

- At least six years of rigorous medical training
- More than two years of clinical experience prior to practice
- Specialize in managing complex chronic conditions
- Excel in handling uncertainty in patient care



53%

Backbone of the health care system

Over half of all medical care (53 per cent) from all doctors is provided by a family physician.²

This includes:



Primary care



Emergency department



Home and long-term care



Maternal and newborn care



Surgery



Palliative care

For 19 out of 20 patients with a regular primary care provider, that provider is a family physician.¹

Family physicians are versatile experts providing care wherever it's needed—in primary care clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and in the comfort of patients' homes.

As specialists, family physicians have the required breadth of knowledge and ability to manage complex care. As more and more Canadians reach and surpass 65 years of age, the presence of complex chronic diseases will continue to grow. For patients with chronic conditions, ongoing care from a family physician can reduce the odds of being diagnosed with a second chronic condition or multimorbidity.³ Family physicians get to know both their patients' medical and social history and can connect patients to community and health care system resources.

In many cases, family physicians are the only professional managing chronic disease care for patients with conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, certain chronic lung diseases, and asthma.⁴ Family physicians also provide more total psychotherapy and counselling services than any other specialist in Canada.⁴

Family physicians advocate on behalf of their patients and communities. They provide leadership, mentorship, and accountability in teams as they collaborate with other care professionals to optimize patient outcomes. Their expertise and experience are key to better health outcomes and better patient satisfaction, at a lower cost than hospital-based care.

“When my rural community was about to lose its emergency department due to lack of resources during the pandemic, my colleagues and I advocated to keep as many acute care services as possible. We transformed that department into an urgent care clinic in the same building as our family practice team. As a result, my patients can still access acute services here from my team.”

Prevent avoidable health care costs



Average hospital stay in Canada :
\$7,803⁵



Average Family physician consult/visit in Canada:
\$54⁶

The Canadian economy loses an estimated
\$190 billion
annually due to indirect income and production **loss from chronic diseases.**⁷



Care by a family physician reduces emergency department use,⁸ even more so than access to other specialists.^{9,10,11,12}

In **rural communities**, higher retention of family physicians **decreases hospitalization rates by up to 20 per cent.**^{13,14}

For every additional 10 family physicians per 100,000 population, there are **40 fewer hospitalizations,**¹⁵ and individuals with greater continuity of care also spend less time in the hospital with shorter lengths of stay.¹⁶

Access to care by the same family physician over time reduces hospitalization of:

- Patients with severe and non-severe mental illness^{17,18}
- Patients in the general population²³
- Patients with dementia¹⁹
- Home care patients²⁴
- Patients with diabetes^{16,20,21,22}

Trusted partners in patient care who provide personalized care across all life stages

Sixty-six per cent of Canadians are even willing to wait longer to be seen by their **own** doctor, rather than a health care provider they do not know.²⁶

Patients with better continuity of care report better quality of life²⁷ in their physiological, psychological, and social health. Furthermore, continuity of care with the same provider can have a protective effect against mortality²⁸ and is linked to reduced mortality rates.²⁹

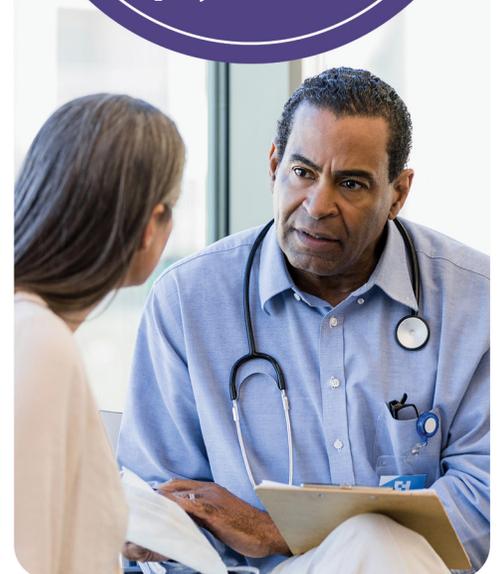
“ I see patients who I cared for as babies who are having their own babies now. I carry longitudinal memory for my patients to inform their care throughout their lifetime. ”

Family physicians are vital to the health care system, offering leadership, advocacy, and comprehensive patient care. Governments must invest in family physicians to address the health care needs of today and tomorrow.

“ Episodic transient treatment is dangerous. Family physicians can provide longitudinal comprehensive care and have a developed instinct on what to do in complex situations. This is because of the experience we’ve acquired during our training. ”



Most (80 per cent) people prefer to access primary care through a family physician.²⁵



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