

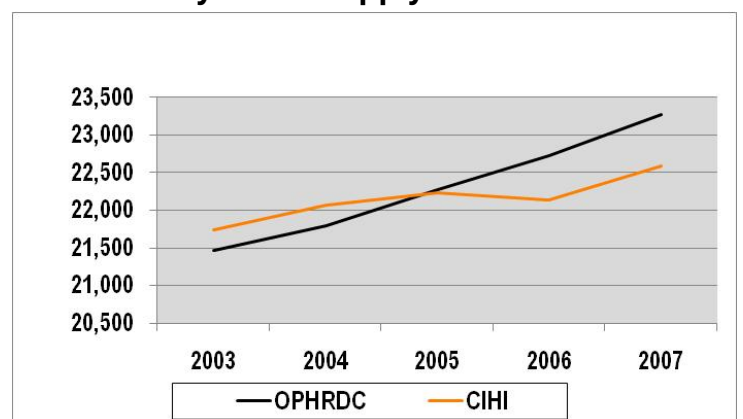
The Research

Last month, the [Canadian Institute for Health Information](#) (CIHI) released [Supply, Distribution and Migration of Canadian Physicians, 2007](#). The statistics in the report are useful for identifying national trends and making comparisons among provinces.

Key Findings

- Physician supply increased by 7% in Canada and 4% in Ontario between 2003 and 2007.
- Physicians are getting older. Over the last five years, the average age of a physician in Canada increased by 1.3 years to 49.6. Ontario physicians are one year older than their Canadian counterparts with a reported average age of 50.5 years.
- Physicians continue to move within Canada and internationally. In 2007, Ontario had a net-gain of 15 physicians from other provinces and five physicians from other countries, both trends have reversed from net-losses in previous years.

Physician Supply in Ontario



The Ontario Story

In Ontario, the [Ontario Physician Human Resources Data Centre](#) (OPHRDC) reports on physician supply. OPHRDC is a collaborative project of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ontario Medical Association and the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine.

In 2007, OPHRDC reported there were 23,266 physicians in Ontario, an increase of 8% since 2003. Of the 23,266 physicians, 10,958 were family physicians and 12,308 specialists. CIHI reports that there were 22,592 physicians in Ontario in 2007 (a 4% increase since 2003), of which 10,872 are family physicians and 11,720 are specialists.

The discrepancy in the figures is due to differing definitions of an “active physician” used in the methodologies to determine physician supply. For example, CIHI excludes military and semi-retired physicians from its definition of “active physician” while OPHRDC includes them.

Each methodology is useful for its respective purpose. OPHRDC determines comprehensive physician supply in Ontario while CIHI reports on data that it is able to consistently gather across all provinces and territories.

Questions to Consider

Defining who is an active physician is becoming more difficult as some physicians reduce their hours as they near retirement and others use technology to serve Ontario patients while living elsewhere (e.g. a physician who reads diagnostic results remotely). These are a few questions to consider:

- Should an “active physician” be counted when he or she is:
 - licensed
 - licensed and authorized to bill for clinical services; or,
 - licensed and actually delivering clinical services?
- How should semi-retired and retired physicians be counted?
- How should physicians that are physically located outside of Ontario but providing services in Ontario be counted?

Health Human Resources Policy Branch
Forecasting and Modelling Unit