



THE COLLEGE OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS  
OF CANADA



LE COLLÈGE DES  
MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE  
DU CANADA

# Family Physicians' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Results of the May 2020 CFPC Members Survey on COVID-19

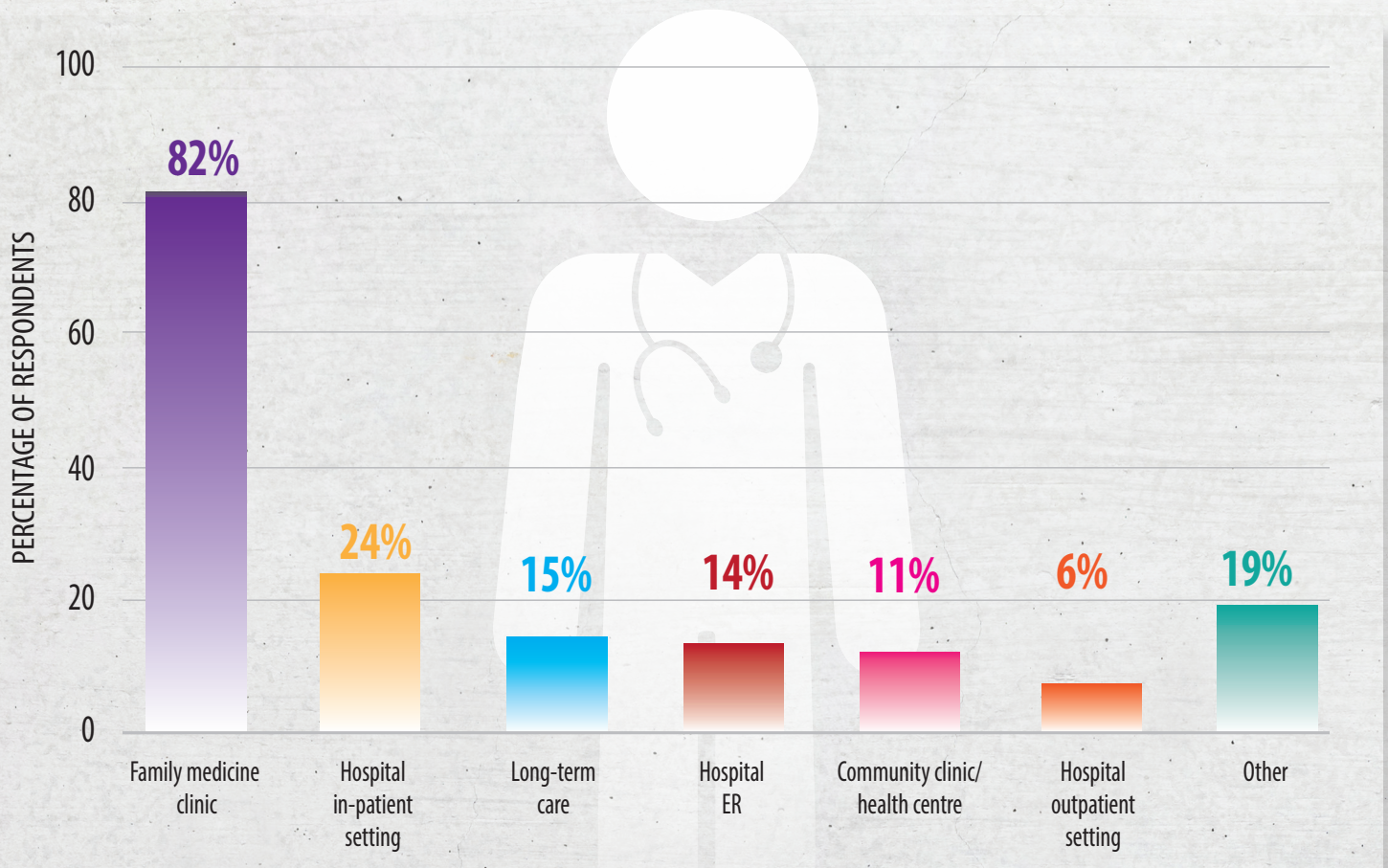
The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) has conducted a survey of members asking them how COVID-19 has affected their practices. Given that many CFPC members are front-line health care providers, it is critically important to know how family doctors are adapting and continuing to care for the patients and populations they serve. Our survey results provide an emerging picture of what family physicians are doing to provide safe, high-quality care and of the concerns they're feeling for their patients and their practices.



### Family doctors are working in many settings during the COVID-19 pandemic

Most survey respondents continue to care for patients in family medicine clinics (82 per cent), but they are also staffing hospital in-patient units (24 per cent), long-term and personal care homes (15 per cent), and emergency rooms (14 per cent).

Figure 1: Percentage of family physicians working in various care settings during COVID-19  
(Respondents could indicate they work in more than one setting)





## Family doctors are moving to where patients need care during COVID-19

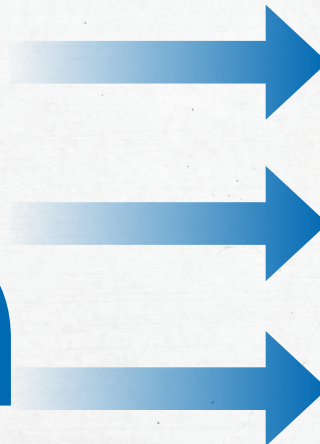
**Seventy-three per cent** of survey respondents are screening patients for COVID-19, many in makeshift assessment centres in hospitals, clinics, hockey arenas, and parking lots.



Overall, **22 per cent of survey respondents have started working in new settings** due to COVID-19. Among them, 21 per cent are providing care in hospital in-patient units, 16 per cent are serving in long-term and personal care homes, and 10 per cent are working in hospital emergency rooms. Some family physicians have come out of retirement to provide care.



Family medicine clinics



**COVID-19 assessment centres**

**Long-term care homes**

**Hospital ERs and in-patient units**

## Major changes are happening in family doctors' offices in response to COVID-19

Family doctors are making significant changes to their practices to ensure that patients receive safe, high-quality care during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, among survey respondents:



**89%**

**ARE CONTACTING PATIENTS AT HOME BY PHONE, EMAIL, OR OTHER METHOD**



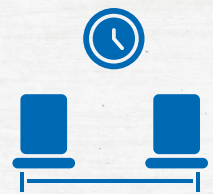
**88%**

**HAVE INCREASED THE CLEANING AND STERILIZATION OF THEIR OFFICE SPACE AND EQUIPMENT**



**87%**

**ARE INCREASING THEIR USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**



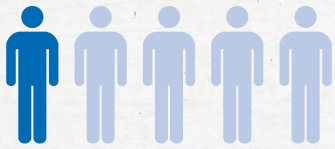
**83%**

**ARE CHANGING WAITING AREAS TO MAKE THEM SAFER**



## Virtual care is connecting family physicians and patients in new ways

While most family physicians continue to work in their clinics, there has been an enormous shift toward providing care virtually. When asked about patient visits in the past week, survey respondents said approximately ...



**1 OUT OF 5**

**WERE FACE-TO-FACE**

**PATIENT VISITS**



**4 OUT OF 5**

**WERE VIRTUAL**

Patients are connecting with their family doctors in all kinds of ways. Most consultations happen over the phone, but large numbers also use video conferencing tools such as Zoom and FaceTime. Patients and physicians are also making use of telemedicine services, such as the Ontario Telemedicine Network.



**91%**

**OF SURVEY  
RESPONDENTS SAY  
MOST OF THEIR  
PATIENT VISITS ARE  
HAPPENING OVER  
THE PHONE**



**52%**

**OF SURVEY  
RESPONDENTS ARE  
CONNECTING  
WITH PATIENTS  
VIA EMAIL**



**43%**

**OF SURVEY  
RESPONDENTS ARE  
MEETING WITH  
PATIENTS BY VIDEO**



**COVID-19 is hurting family practices**

**76%**

**OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS HAVE  
REDUCED THEIR WORK HOURS,  
ON AVERAGE BY 45 PER CENT**

**63%**

**OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE HIGHLY  
CONCERNED ABOUT LOST REVENUE  
FOR THEIR PRACTICES DUE TO FEWER  
PATIENT VISITS**

**45%**

**OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FEEL  
VIRTUAL CARE WILL RESULT IN  
SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL LOSS**

**2%**

**OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS HAVE CLOSED  
THEIR PRACTICES DUE TO COVID-19**

The CFPC will carry out further analyses to determine the causes and effects of these results. They underscore the challenges family doctors are facing in keeping their practices open and, if left unaddressed, they could foreshadow difficulties patients may experience as they try to access care through family practices in the future.





### Like so many, most family doctors are managing to cope during difficult times

The CFPC survey asked family doctors about their personal wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here is how the numbers break down among survey respondents:



**66%**

FEELING PRETTY GOOD, BUT THERE ARE TRYING DAYS/I HAVE A JOB TO DO



**26%**

EXHAUSTED, BUT COPING



**5%**

BURNED OUT AND THINKING OF TAKING A BREAK



**3%**

BEST I'VE EVER FELT



Family doctors are concerned about their own health ...

**55%**  
OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE HIGHLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE LACK OF PPE

**56%**  
ARE HIGHLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE RISK OF GETTING COVID-19



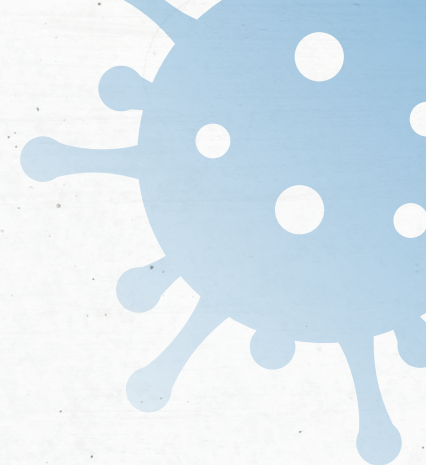
... but are even more concerned about their patients' health

**80%**  
OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE HIGHLY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR PATIENTS' EMOTIONAL/ MENTAL STRESS

**71%**  
OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE HIGHLY CONCERNED ABOUT REDUCED CONTACT WITH PATIENTS FOR CONCERNS NOT RELATED TO COVID-19

**79%**  
OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE TAKING STEPS TO ENSURE PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE CARE





## Methodological notes:

The CFPC Members Survey on COVID-19 was sent to 33,243 family physicians, excluding residents and those living outside Canada. The survey was available in English and French. Data were gathered between April 28 and May 13, 2020. The results are based on voluntary, self-reported information provided by respondents. The questions about virtual care used in the CFPC Members Survey on COVID-19 were based on those developed by the Larry A. Green Center in the United States.

A total of **4,308** CFPC members replied to the survey, for an overall response rate of **13** per cent. Geographic and demographic member counts and response rates are summarized below.

### Geographic Response Rates

Region	Invited	Responses	Response Rate
Alberta	4,739	691	14.6%
British Columbia	5,622	722	12.8%
Manitoba	1,275	185	14.5%
New Brunswick	780	133	17.1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	621	81	13.0%
Northwest Territories	51	1	2.0%
Nova Scotia	1,055	130	12.3%
Nunavut	20	1	5.0%
Ontario	13,996	1,708	12.2%
Prince Edward Island	130	10	7.7%
Quebec	3,698	519	14.0%
Saskatchewan	1,186	117	9.9%
Yukon	70	10	14.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,243</b>	<b>4,308</b>	<b>13.0%</b>

### Demographic Response Rates

Sex	Invited	Responses	Response Rate
Female	16,633	2,579	15.5%
Male	16,610	1,729	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,243</b>	<b>4,308</b>	<b>13.0%</b>

Age	Invited	Responses	Response Rate
< 30 years	1,188	130	10.9%
30 – 39 years	9,434	952	10.1%
40 – 49 years	8,276	1,075	13.0%
50 – 59 years	7,032	1,167	16.6%
60 – 69 years	4,851	737	15.2%
70 – 79 years	1,975	221	11.2%
≥ 80 years	484	26	5.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,243</b>	<b>4,308</b>	<b>13.0%</b>