

1-in-5 Ontarians could be without a family doctor by 2025

Ontario's family doctors stand ready to work with the Government of Ontario

(TORONTO) Sept. 13, 2022 – With new research showing that 1-in-5 Ontarians could be without a family doctor in the next three years, the Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP) is continuing to raise the alarm on the growing shortage of family physicians in Ontario.

“Ontario’s healthcare system is in crisis, and that includes family doctors,” said OCFP President-Elect Dr. Mekalai Kumanan. “The family doctor shortage will be felt by all, regardless of where we live in Ontario. In some cases, entire families could be without one. We must act now.”

The new research from [INSPIRE PHC](#) (INSPIRE Primary Health Care) published by the Ontario Community Health Profiles Partnership (OCHPP), shows that as of March 2020, nearly 1.8 million Ontarians were without a regular family doctor. Additionally, 1.7 million Ontarians have a family doctor who is over 65 and therefore poised to retire.

If current trends persist, it means that more than 3 million Ontarians may not have a family doctor in the next three years.

Compounding the current family doctor shortage and expected retirements is that fewer medical students are choosing family medicine. Additionally, there is projected growth in older populations that will require more complex care from family physicians.

“When patients don’t have a family doctor it means, for example, that cancers may go undetected or chronic illnesses may not be managed well, leading to poorer health for Ontarians and higher costs down the road,” said Dr. Kamila Premji, part of the [INSPIRE PHC](#) collaborative that led the research. “Ontarians will also turn to hospital emergency rooms because they have nowhere else to go for help.”

The OCFP has solutions and is urging the Ontario government to work with family doctors to:

- Ensure Ontarians have a family doctor with a team that may include mental health workers, social workers, nurses and administrative support staff so that patients can get the help they need faster.
- Increase the time that family doctors can spend providing direct patient care by reducing administrative burden – more than 25 per cent of family doctors’ time is spent doing administrative tasks.
- Ensure every Ontarian has a family doctor by recruiting and retaining more family doctors within the province.

“Ontarians are already feeling the impact of the family doctor shortage, and this will only get worse,” said Dr. Kumanan. “The OCFP stands ready to work with Ontario to ensure that each of these solutions are implemented. We want to ensure that all Ontarians have access to the comprehensive care that only a family physician can provide.”

For more information, visit LifeWithoutADoctor.ca.

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About the Ontario College of Family Physicians

The OCFP represents more than 15,000 family doctors who support Ontarians in both urban and rural communities in our province. Our members have direct insight into the unique healthcare needs of Ontario's varying populations. With their guidance, and together with our family physician members, the OCFP has developed three overarching solutions for Ontario parties to implement post-election that will increase access to care for more Ontarians.

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