

KEEPING DOORS OPEN

How did COVID-19 affect family practice?

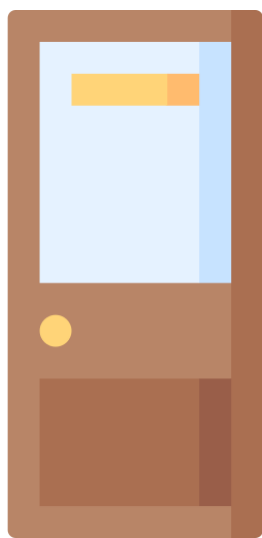
The way family doctors provide care changed during COVID-19. To protect patients, clinics were asked to take a “virtual first” approach. While many patients want the option of virtual care to continue post-pandemic, it is unclear whether physicians agree and what supports are needed to sustainably integrate virtual platforms into safe, timely and patient-centred care for all.

PHYSICIAN EXPERIENCE SURVEY

Between March and June 2021, we surveyed 1,186 family doctors providing comprehensive care in Toronto, Ontario. We asked about how they were running their practice in January 2021, what supports they needed for virtual care, and their future practice intentions.

- Of the 1,016 (86%) that responded to our survey:
 - Respondents had a mean graduating year of 1998 and mean practice size of 1215 patients; 61.5% were women.
 - 13% were the only physician in their clinic.

KEY FINDINGS



99.7%

said their practice was open to in person or virtual visits in January 2021

94.8%

said they saw patients in person in January 2021

- All physicians who did not see patients in person reported arrangements for patients to be seen by a colleague
- The most important factor for not seeing patients in person was health concerns

71.5%

was the estimated amount of time spent on virtual visits (predominantly by phone)

30.8%

said they provided in-person care to patients reporting COVID-like symptoms

17.2%

of physicians planned to close their current practice in the next five years

The most desired supports for virtual care were



Billing codes for email and/or secure messaging



Funding and support to enable patients to engage in virtual care



Funding for equipment or software that support virtual care

For updates, please visit: <https://maphealth.ca/keeping-doors-open/>

Read the paper: <https://www.cfp.ca/content/68/11/836>

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