

# PHYSICIANS: Where Have They All Gone?

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NTAB - 09/16/03

# Physician Shortage:

- Background
  - ◆ What Happened and How Bad Is It?
- Initiatives – Provincially
- Initiatives – Niagara Region

# Physician Shortage

## ■ What Happened?

- ◆ 1992 decision to cap Medical School enrolments
- ◆ Increase for demand in health care as “boomer generation” ages
- ◆ Increase in number of women entering medical schools

# Physician Shortage – Background (Cont'd)

- ◆ Medical students are not choosing Family Medicine as a Specialty
- ◆ Specialty training takes more time to complete
- ◆ Residents who complete a Family Medicine program are not entering traditional Family Practice

# Physician Shortage – Background (Cont'd)

- ◆ 1995 onward – became more difficult for foreign doctors to enter Canada
- ◆ Physician population is aging
  - ◆ Physicians are retiring earlier
  - ◆ 33% of Physicians are 50 or older

**How**

**Bad**

**is**

**It ?**

# Total Demand in Ontario

- 726 Family Physicians
- 400 Multi-Specialty Physicians
- Some reports forecast that Ontario will require as many as 3,000 additional physicians by the end of the decade\*

\*OMA Report and other summaries of the Expert Panel

# How Bad Is It ??



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**WHAT IS BEING DONE?**

# **Provincial Initiatives**

# Provincial Initiatives:

## Underserviced Area Program

- COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT VISIT PROGRAM
- FREE TUITION PROGRAM
- INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM FOR PHYSICIANS

## Provincial Initiatives (cont'd)

- Increase in medical school enrollments - northern medical school
- Funding of nurse practitioners in under serviced areas - 7 for Niagara in the first round
- Family Health Networks/Family Health Groups
- Repatriation and re-entry program

## Provincial Initiatives (Cont'd)

### **International Medical Graduates (IMG)**

- APIMG Program – Assessment Program for International Medical Graduates
- IMG Program – Expansion of IMG Residents into Residency Programs
- Fast Track – new Pilot Project announced – November 2002

## Provincial Initiatives (Cont'd)

- It is estimated that Initiatives introduced in the last 4 years will add almost 1,500 more physicians to the practice pool – however....

..the full impact will not be felt until 2010

# Niagara Region Strategies

## Family Physicians

- DHC formed task force in 1998 - Blueprint Developed

Niagara Recruitment and Retention  
Coordinator

Jenny Simpson – June 2001

- Works with 12 Niagara Communities
- Part Time – Funded by the Region

- Niagara Region short by approximately 70  
FP's

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# Niagara Region Strategies

## Specialist Physicians

### Physician Recruitment

- Joan Hatcher - Full time position
- recruits for 8 hospitals
- New initiative of the Niagara Health System
- Implemented in August 2001

# Regional Perspective

- All communities are Underserviced
- Recruitment teams have been organized in all communities
- All communities have a key contact person to organize tours and events in their municipality
- One representative from the community teams comes to a regional meeting - held 6-8 weeks

# How it works:

- Marketing and promotional information developed for all communities - CD
- Attend recruitment fairs as a Region to avoid confusion
- Single port of entry for the physician in the Region

# Successes

- Hundreds of Community and Hospital Visits in past 2 years
- 23 Family Physicians to the Region since 2001
- 32 Specialists have committed to coming to Niagara since 2001

# What we have learned along the way

- Commitment required from : communities, politicians, hospitals and physicians
- Level playing field is difficult to achieve
- Each community has developed individualized recruiting plans
- Early exposure to the field and the region is **KEY**
- Healthy competition does exist - but the bottom line remains the same - to get

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# Future directions

- Focus on retention
- Increase teaching activities throughout the Region
- Continue to promote the Region and the unique opportunities that each community has to offer
- Look at other options for primary care
  - Nurse practitioners

# QUESTIONS ?

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