

The Community Health Reporter

From the Community Health & Well-Being: A Resource for Planning Report
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Did you know ...

In Southwestern Ontario (SWO):

- 73.2% of residents reported visiting a family doctor in the last 12 months?
- there is a need for more physicians?
- hysterectomy rates are higher than in Ontario overall?

This newsletter discusses self-reported health care utilization for health care providers and facilities, physician shortages, and rates of certain common surgical procedures. These issues are important as they can impact health care services that you and your community receive.

Who sees which doctor how often?

The following table shows the percentage of the population who reported at least one visit in the last 12 months to the following health care providers/facilities (1990):

	SWO (%)	Ontario (%)
Family physicians	73.2	76.6
Specialists	23.6	28.9
Psychologists	3.8	3.9
Emergency room visits	20.2	19.9
Hospital admissions	10.8	10.4

The number of health problems and the self-reported health status of an individual were the strongest predictors of visiting a family physicians (FP) or specialist at least once in the previous 12 months.

In Southwestern Ontario (SWO) in 1990, 78.1% of females and 68.2% of males reported at least one visit to a FP in the last 12 months. Women reported significantly higher use of the ➤



Your health & tomorrow's health care system

Fact: Southwestern Ontario (SWO) is in need of both family physicians and specialists. In SWO, there is one active family physician (FP/GP) for every 1358 people. In Ontario, there is one active family physician (FP/GP) for every 1124 persons. (K. Clements & N. Johnston. *Physicians in Ontario*, 1997)

Situation:

- Physician availability is affected by a number of factors including geographic distance and physician workload.
- The actual number of physicians in a community can be affected by such issues as the number leaving Canada and the ageing of the physician population.
- Community factors also can have an impact on physician availability. For example, the population overall is ageing, which leads to increased health care needs.

Possible Solutions:

- A recent Ontario Government report recommends an increase in medical school enrolment.
- An increase in the number of foreign medical graduates practicing in Ontario to assist with this problem. The issue of licensing these doctors is currently being explored.
- In 1997, The University of Western Ontario Medical School began a new curriculum emphasizing learning experiences in many different communities.

following types of health care providers: FPs, specialists, nurses, dentists, optometrists and pharmacists, and more hospital admissions. Men reported visiting physiotherapists more often. The differences in visits between women and men, in the younger age groups, may be related to childbearing and reproductive health.



Common Surgical Procedures

The following table shows the number of certain surgical procedures performed (per 100,000 persons over the age of 20) for Southwestern Ontario (SWO) and Ontario. The numbers have been adjusted for age and sex and are from 1994.

	SWO	Ontario
Total knee replacement	108.4	73.9
Total hip replacement	98.6	85.9
Hysterectomy	633.5	565.1
Coronary Artery Bypass	73.4	79.0

Total knee and hip replacements are one of the possible treatments for the morbidity associated with osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis. Although any joint can be affected by this disease, weight-bearing joints like hips and knees are the most common. Risk factors include heredity, excess body weight, injury, and complications of another type of arthritis. Surgery is only applicable in certain cases.

As seen above, the hysterectomy rate for SWO is higher than the province as a whole. There are many reasons for regional variations in hysterectomy rates, such as access to a physician and/or specialist. Also, there are a wide range of opinions among health professionals as to when and why hysterectomies are performed.

Coronary Artery Bypass Graft surgery is currently the most used surgical intervention for heart disease. The surgery is done to reroute, or "bypass", blood around a clogged artery that supplies blood to the heart. The decision as to whether bypass surgery should be performed depends upon a number of factors, and the decision should be made by you and your doctor. Some factors include whether or not the patient's condition is responding to non-surgical treatment, such as drug therapy, the number of arteries affected, the extent of the blockage, and the age and general health of the patient.

If you have any concerns regarding your personal care or your health condition, please discuss the matter with your doctor(s).

Community Resources

Places to look for a family physician, dentist or psychologist (please note that all specialist appointments must be referred by your family physician):

- Ontario College of Family Physicians, Referral Service: (800) 670-6237
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (800) 268-7096
- London & District Academy of Medicine (519) 673-0950
- Ontario Psychological Association, Referral Service (800) 268-0069
- London & District Dental Society (519) 434-0551

For other health questions please consult with your health practitioner.

Other Health Information Resources:

- Heart & Stroke Foundation (800) 360-1557 or (519) 679-0641
- The Arthritis Society, London (519) 433-2191

Newsletter information source

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