



News Release

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MORE FUNDING FOR DOCTORS MAY NOT MEAN IMPROVED ACCESS: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) The province's creation of alternate funding arrangements for family physicians has meant more Ontarians now have family doctors, but it has also resulted in significant increases in payments to participating physicians, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2011 Annual Report*.

"What concerned me about this was not that these doctors were making more money but rather that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has not analyzed whether this has actually resulted in Ontarians getting better access to a doctor," McCarter said today following the release of the Report.

"Just because more people can now say they have a family doctor doesn't necessarily mean they enjoy better access to a doctor," he added. "In fact, a ministry survey showed that while more than 40% of patients got in to see their doctor within a day, the rest waited up to a week, or even longer, and these percentages were similar to those of three years earlier."

By the end of the 2009/10 fiscal year, more than 7,500 of the province's 12,000 family physicians were participating in alternate funding arrangements, and more than nine million Ontarians had enrolled with these physicians. By 2011, there were 17 types of alternative funding arrangements for family physicians. Three of them—the Family Health Group (FHG), Family Health Organization (FHO), and Family Health Network (FHN)—accounted for more than 90% of the family physicians and 90% of the patients involved in these arrangements.

A survey commissioned by the Ministry estimated that 500,000 more Ontarians had a family doctor in 2010 than in 2007 as a result of the arrangements, under which physicians are often paid an annual fee to provide a list of services to patients enrolled with them, rather than receiving a fee for each service performed.

Other significant findings include the following:

- Of the 8.6 million people enrolled with an FHO or FHG, 1.9 million (22%) did not visit their doctors' practices in the 2009/10 fiscal year. However, physicians in these practices received \$123 million just for having these patients enrolled. Almost half of the 1.9 million patients visited physicians with whom they were not enrolled and these doctors billed the Ontario Health Insurance Plan for those visits.
- The Ministry intended alternate funding arrangements to be more generous than traditional fee-for-service payments and in 2007/08, most of the family physicians participating in alternate funding arrangements were being paid at least 25% more than their fee-for-service counterparts. However, the Ministry has not tracked the full cost of each alternate funding arrangement since 2007/08.

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