



ily, but not exclusively, at graduates of foreign medical schools who are seeking Canadian licensure.

The Clinical Assessment and Enhancement Program (CAEP) will be run by the Professional Development Office at Memorial's Faculty of Medicine. Dr. Francine Lemire, a family physician from Corner Brook, is director of the new program, which will be based on the province's west coast. It is the first major faculty program to be run from outside St. John's.

Dr. Carl Robbins, the vice-dean of medicine, said the new program will meet a critical need. "Many physicians responding to recruitment en-

deavours for rural areas require further training to meet minimal licensure requirements. Right now there's no mechanism in Newfoundland to assess these applicants adequately and provide the training required to ensure competency."

CAEP will be open not only to foreign medical graduates but also to graduates of Canadian schools who have been out of practice and require assessment and skill enhancement. It will also be used by practising physicians who have been identified, by themselves or otherwise, as needing upgrading.

The assessment instruments in CAEP will be standardized and take

the form of multiple-choice examinations, case-based therapeutics and structured oral tests, standardized patient examinations, short-answer examinations and psychological assessments. — *Sharon Gray*, information officer, Memorial University

BC launches computerized organ-donor registry

British Columbia has developed Canada's first computerized organ-donor registry. The new system, designed to address current problems surrounding consent and long waiting lists, is expected to increase organ and tissue donations significantly.

Paying physicians: Is a different method really better?

Dr. Sam Shortt, the director of health policy at Queen's University, says the university's alternative funding plan is generating little of the change in physician behaviour that had been expected.

"The theory behind [the plan] was that it would allow physicians to get off the fee-for-service treadmill and give them more time for research and more time for each patient," Shortt said during the first in a series of information sessions sponsored by the CMA's Research Directorate. "However, so far we have been unable to detect any substantial change in physician behaviour."

The plan, launched almost 4 years ago, provides a block-funding budget for all full-time clinical staff at Queen's and covers teaching, research and all inpatient and outpatient clinical services provided in 3 Kingston hospitals — the Providence Continuing Care Centre, Hotel Dieu and Kingston General.

Shortt, a member of the plan's evaluation steering committee, told physicians attending the CMA in-

formation session in Ottawa that even though the plan is solid in theory, figuring out how well it works is proving difficult. The meeting attracted practising physicians, leaders from organized medicine and health researchers.



Shortt said the steering committee examined outpatient waiting times in an attempt to measure the new plan's impact on patient care.

"While results varied considerably by specialty, no clinically significant changes were detected," he said.

When the program began it was expected to generate widespread changes in the way physicians allocate their time and in the relationships between clinical faculty at Queen's and referring physicians from the community. Shortt admitted that the scope of change has been smaller than expected.

"This was supposed to be a fundamental change in mind-set, but depending on the number of years a physician has been in the system, it is hard to change. However, some physicians came to the program because they knew it would allow them to conduct their research."

Evaluation of the alternative funding plan will continue throughout 1998 and the steering committee is scheduled to produce a final report by Jan. 1, 1999. The CMA's Research Directorate hopes to schedule a series of sessions on various aspects of the health care system throughout 1998. — © *Steven Wharry*