



Clinic swamped as dozens line up awaiting new FP

Talk about a warm welcome — phones were jammed, patients lined up and the national news media showed up when Dr. Kathleen Flynn, 27, started accepting appointments for her new family-medicine practice at Ontario's Peterborough Clinic early in November.

Flynn, who completed her residency last June, wanted to have some appointments booked before arriving for work, so she wasn't even there on the first day, Nov. 6. However, her patients-to-be were out in full force. The clinic's voice-mail system can handle only 60 calls, and it began filling up every 15 minutes. More than 50 people lined up at the clinic doors for the start of office hours, and *Peterborough This Week* reported that the administrator had to turn people away.

"I knew the community had a physician shortage but I sure didn't expect there to be a lineup at the door," the McMaster University graduate told *CMAJ*. "It's been a rather exciting time."

From the outset Flynn accepted only patients who were without a family physician. "No transfers," she said. "I knew there were a lot of people who didn't have a family doctor and they were my priority." Moving into the fully equipped clinic made the start-up easier, and lots of colleagues were willing to give advice on setting up her practice.

Flynn ended up taking on 1000 patients during her first 4 weeks of practice, and by mid-December she was booking interview appointments for February. She was not taking new patients during the holiday season so she and her staff could catch up. Nurse Patti Fitzgerald welcomed the break. It was the former hospital nurse's first office position, and she said attempting to keep up with the phone calls

and appointment bookings provided a true baptism under fire. "It's been unbelievable," she said. "It was 4 weeks before we noticed a slowdown in the calls for appointments."

Peterborough, which has about 65 000 residents, was hit by a physician shortage this year after 2 doctors moved to the US and another 2 retired. There hasn't been a new physician in the community for a year, and the arrival of a female MD proved particularly popular.

Flynn said she couldn't understand why physicians have been reluctant to locate in the community, which is less than 90 minutes from Toronto and is in the heart of the popular Kawartha Lakes. Although the city still needs psychiatrists, all other medical specialties are well represented and physicians have access to Toronto's services and specialists.

The choice was easy enough for Flynn. A native of nearby Lindsay, which has 15 000 residents, she always intended to stay close to her family in a small community. When she finished her residency, she practised as a locum while deciding where to hang her shingle. She had done an elective in Peterborough, and in September decided to locate there. She's already purchased a house and is settling into a community that she says "has lots to offer and lots to do."

Her new practice has no dominant demographic trend. She inherited older patients from the retired physicians, but Peterborough also has "lots of nice young families." Flynn, who has an interest in psychiatry, is looking forward to a rewarding career. Last fall it was estimated that about 5000 people in the Peterborough area were without a family doctor, but for now Flynn will stick to her target caseload of 1500 patients. "I'm

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Dr. Kathleen Flynn: baptism under fire

in my first year of practice," she said. "I'll try that many and then see how I handle it."

Detroit MDs make "humanitarian gesture" to Ontario moms

Two Detroit hospitals opened their doors to pregnant Canadians when Ontario obstetricians refused to accept new patients during a contract dispute with the provincial government last fall. In what was called a "humanitarian gesture" by Detroit doctors, the Grace and Hutzel hospitals agreed to provide interim prenatal and postnatal care and handle deliveries at confidential set rates. The cost was covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan.

American Medical News reported in December that physicians at the hospitals, which are within 15 minutes of the tunnel connecting Detroit and Windsor, Ont., had seen more than a dozen patients from Canada because of the dispute. Ontario obstetricians and other specialists began accepting