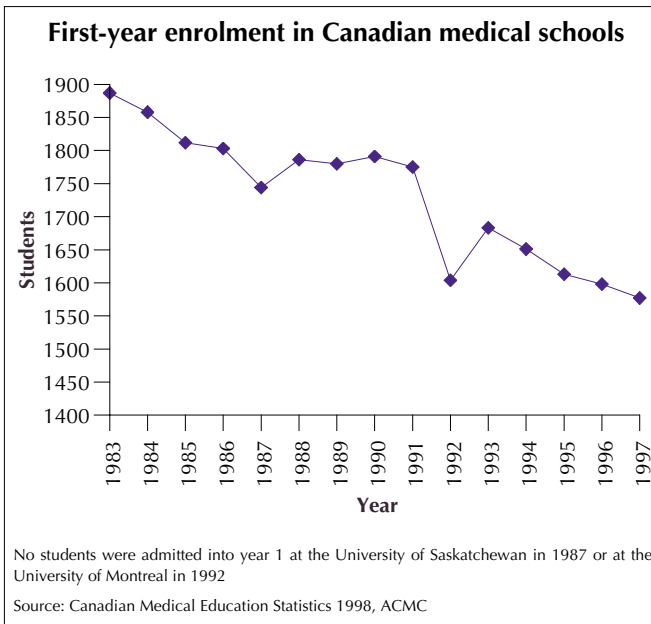




## Pulse

# Our incredible shrinking medical schools

Recent data from the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges (ACMC) point to a steady decline in the size of first-year classes at Canadian medical schools during the the past 15 years. The data hold major implications for Canadian physicians and patients because the cuts are occurring amidst predictions of a physician shortage.



In 1997, 1577 students enrolled in first-year classes, compared with the peak of 1887 students in 1983. This 16% decline also represents a 30% reduction in the number of first-year positions available per 100 000 Canadians. The University of Toronto continues to have the largest entry class (175 students) followed by the University of Montreal (142).

Students who get accepted are facing bigger bills. First-year tuition fees are highest at McMaster University (\$10 500) and lowest for Quebec residents attending the University of Montreal (\$2452).

As has been the case recently, slightly more than half of the first-year students are women. The University of Sherbrooke has the highest proportion of female students starting medical school (71%), followed by McMaster at 62%. The University of Manitoba has the lowest percentage — only 30% of its first-year students are women. Quebec's 4 schools have a higher proportion of female medical students (59%) than the 12 schools in the other provinces (46%).

**This column was written by Lynda Buske, Chief, Physician Resources Information Planning, CMA. Readers may send potential research topics to Patrick Sullivan (sullip@cma.ca; 613 731-8610 or 800 663-7336, x2126; fax 613 565-2382).**

## Cool sites

### www.pedinet.com

My wife and I became first time parents recently, and every time our daughter refuses to eat, pulls at her ear or cries longer than usual I find myself wishing I remembered more about my pediatrics rotations. Fortunately, worry warts like me can resort to *PediaNet*, an award-winning site that bills itself as “a comprehensive pediatric health and information resource for parents, children and health professionals.” It allows parents to check out growth charts, immunization scheduling or a disease database that has information on everything from Aarskog syndrome to Zellweger's syndrome. Information is compiled from at least 3 sources, including *Nelson's Textbook of Pediatrics*. One article dispenses prac-

tical advice on how to give medicine to children. A section entitled Emergency Alerts has articles on diverse topics such as recent crib recalls, hepatitis A and Halloween safety tips. Physicians and other health care professionals gain access to additional files through a free registration process. As usual, the site promises not to exploit any of the information it collects, but at the very least I suspect you can expect some junk email. The sections for professionals include CME, a Residents' Corner, a more extensive disease database and an Ask the Experts Q and A section. This site will be of use to residents, pediatricians and family doctors, as well as parents who are looking for a dependable source of information on kids' health. — *Dr. Robert Patterson, robpatterson@attcanada.net*