

On the Net

MD recruiting goes online

Physician recruitment is an ongoing challenge in many parts of Canada, and even though techniques like classified ads remain popular — in 1999 *CMAJ* carried the most classifieds in its 88-year history — many provinces and communities are now rolling out the cyber carpet to attract new doctors.

For example, the Saskatchewan Physician Recruitment Project (www.mdopportunity.org) is in part a web-based system aimed at boosting the number of doctors coming to that province. “We have found the site to be very successful in assisting in recruitment,” says Glenys Coleman, the recruitment coordinator. “I am not sure the net will replace other recruitment tools, but it definitely is an excellent addition.”

The site includes a list of communities needing doctors and links to information about lifestyle, licensing and even immigration. Saskatchewan is not alone in using this relatively new tool. The Ontario Medical Association has operated an online placement service for several years (www.oma.org/cmeprog/omaps/omaps.htm), with its province-wide listings updated weekly. The Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan (www.ruralnet.ab.ca/rpap) and Nova Scotia’s Physician Recruitment Online (www.gov.ns.ca/health/physicians/) do the same thing. Meanwhile, BC offers its Health Match service (www.healthmatchbc.org), which allows interested doctors to apply directly online.

“Health Match BC was established in January 1999 and is positioned to take an expanded role in the recruitment/retention of all health professionals to regions of BC that have difficulty in recruitment and retention,” the site states. “Our aim is to offer one-stop shopping as you search for an opportunity, apply for the post and plan your relocation.”

As well, some communities and clinics have launched their own online searches. The Dawson Creek Medical Clinic in



northeast BC (www.dcmclinic.bc.ca) invites doctors to take a virtual tour of the facility and the surrounding area. “Through this site we hope to tell you more about ourselves, what we have to offer and what our geographic region has to offer,” the home page states. “If you are a physician looking for short- or long-term work or for a permanent position, check out our recruiting section. The Peace River Region and the City of Dawson Creek have a lot to offer to families and physicians alike.” Many American sites also advertise physician jobs online. Fairview Health Services (fairview.org/recruitment/) in Minnesota is using the Internet to build up its team of managed care physicians. And this year, *CMAJ* will become part of the trend: its classified ads will be available online by year’s end. — *Michael O’Reilly*, mike@oreilly.net

Pediatric subspecialists in short supply in BC

When Dr. Judith Hall, head of pediatrics at the Children’s and Women’s Health Centre of BC, took up her position in 1990, she found that British Columbia had the lowest number of pediatric subspecialists in Canada, and only 5 new ones were being trained annually.

The result? In the last 5 years, says Hall, at least 50% of the province’s subspecialists have been recruited from overseas. BC currently has about 90 pediatric subspecialists, well below

the national average. Hall says fees and working conditions make it difficult to attract applicants. These subspecialists receive the same fee as a general pediatrician for an office visit even though they may spend up to 3 times longer with a child. In addition, some are always on call. Hall would like to see this reduced to 1 day in 4.

Despite the daunting conditions, turnover is not as serious a problem as recruiting: only 2 of the subspecialists,

most of whom practise at the Children’s Hospital, left in the last year.

Hall says BC offers excellent teaching and research opportunities, but “if [doctors] are so overworked, how can you be expected to show leadership?” She wants to work with the Ministry of Health to develop a national physician resource plan that would at least allow the province to meet the national average for practising subspecialists. — *Heather Kent*, Vancouver