

BC med school to become country's largest

Medical school enrolment in British Columbia will rise by almost 75% by 2005, with the number of first-year students increasing from 128 to 224. The increase marks a major shift in policy. Although its population has grown by 50% in the last 20 years, BC's output of new physicians has not changed with it.

By 2005, 176 first-year medical students will enter the University of British Columbia (UBC), with the remaining 48 spread equally between new campuses at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and University of Victoria. UBC and its satellites will likely form Canada's largest school when the changes are complete. The University of Toronto

currently accepts 198 first-year students.

The announcement addresses concerns about a physician supply crisis in northern BC. UNBC, in Prince George, is building a 3900-sq-m (42 000-sq-ft), \$110-million teaching facility and hiring up to 24 new faculty. President Charles Jago hopes the school becomes a national leader in rural and Aboriginal health training. "We will be looking for students who come from Northern or rural regions who are oriented to practising in those communities."

Essentially, the 3 campuses will be merged into a single training program, and all students will graduate with a degree from UBC. The University of

Washington and some Scandinavian countries have used similar outreach programs to train and retain doctors in rural and northern communities. Dr. John Cairns, UBC's dean of medicine, anticipates "all kinds of challenges" because of the tri-campus plan, particularly in attracting faculty members. The initiative does include \$12.5 million for a new Life Sciences Centre at UBC.

Dr. Heidi Oetter, president of the British Columbia Medical Association, welcomes the enhanced rural training for undergraduates but says rural specialist training needs support so that a "rural stream" can be created in that area too. — *Heather Kent, Vancouver*

PULSE

Canada's cosmopolitan medical profession

Canada has traditionally relied on a significant number of international medical graduates (IMGs) to provide medical services, particularly in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland. Data from the 2002 CMA Masterfile list of physicians indicate that 23% of Canada's practising physicians were trained outside the country. The pres-

ence of IMGs in practice ranges from a low of 12% in Quebec to a high of 56% in Saskatchewan.

The split between family physicians and certified specialists trained outside Canada is identical to the split within the overall physician population (52% vs. 48%). IMGs tend to be older than the majority of physicians educated

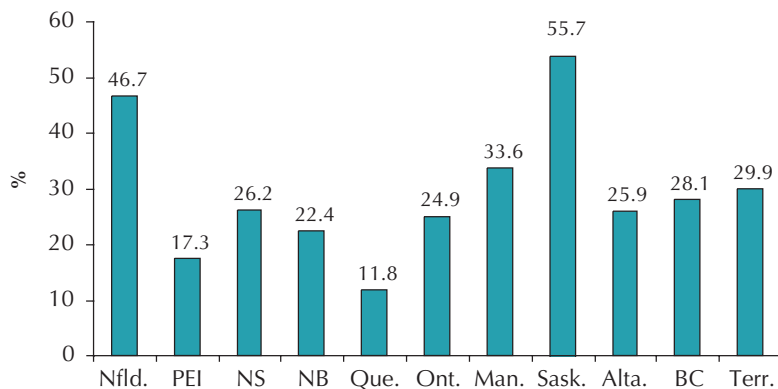
here. Forty-seven percent are aged 55 or more, compared with 29% of all physicians. As well, a smaller proportion are female (22% vs. 30%).

Overall, 31% received their education in Europe and 12% in South Africa. However, of those who graduated since 1990, only 16% were trained in Europe, compared with 43% in South Africa.

International medical graduates represented 24% of all physicians who moved abroad in 2000 and 16% of those who returned, Canadian Institute for Health Information data indicate. Consequently, the net loss involved a greater proportion of foreign graduates (37%) than their 23% share of the overall physician population.

In the postgraduate training system, there are currently 369 trainees in ministry-funded positions, up from 291 positions in 1999 but down from 790 in 1993. The Canadian Post-MD Education Registry Annual Census for 2001/02 shows there are an additional 1511 visa trainees within the system, funded primarily by sources outside Canada. — *Lynda Buske, Associate Director of Research, CMA*

International medical graduates in practice by province and territories, as percent of total



Source: CMA Masterfile, January 2002