

Objective



There have been troubling signs in Canada that some newly certified medical specialists have had difficulties obtaining employment. The main objective of this longitudinal study is to examine the factors underlying specialist/subspecialist physician under/unemployment in Canada.

Design

A mixed-method research design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches was applied.

- ✓ 50 voluntary, confidential interviews with selected stakeholders including: Royal College specialty and subspecialty medicine committee chairs and program directors, senior hospital leaders, post-graduate deans, residents and recent graduates.
- ✓ Longitudinal quantitative survey data collected since 2011 through an online survey to every new Royal College specialty and subspecialty certificant.

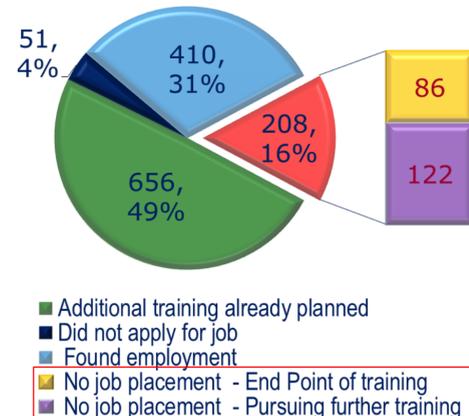
Job Placement Quantitative Survey

Cohort Size and Response Rate

	Year	Specialists	Sub-Specialists	Total
Cohort Size	2011	1597	405	2002
	2012	1766	465	2231
Response Rate	2011	530 (33.2%)	128 (31.6%)	658 (32.9%)
	2012	586 (33.2%)	127 (27.3%)	713 (31.9%)

2011 & 2012 Combined Cohort Profile

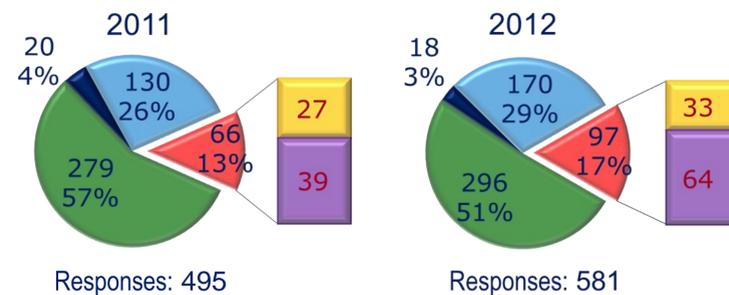
In 2011-2012, **208 new graduates** reported that they were unable to find a job placement. Within this subset, **122 specialists and subspecialists** were/are pursuing further training because they could not find a position.



Results: Summary profile of under-unemployed population

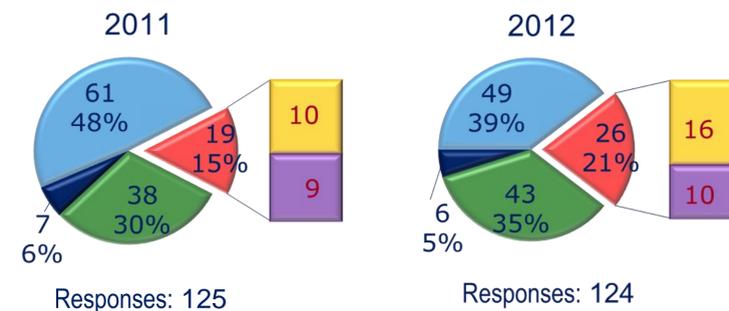
Specialists

In 2011, **66 new specialists (13%)** indicated that they were unable to find a job placement. In 2012, **97 respondents (17%)** reported the same concerns.



Subspecialists

In 2012, **6% more subspecialists over 2011** indicated they were unable to find a job placement (2011:19 or 15%; 2012: 26 or 21%).



Findings suggest **most impacted** are from **procedural disciplines**.

Discipline	Unable to find a job placement	Response rate
Gastroenterology	9/27 (33.33%)	27/92 (29.35%)
Neurosurgery	8/21 (28.26%)	21/50 (42.00%)
Nuclear Medicine	4/7 (57.14%)	7/21 (33.33%)
Ophthalmology	13/30 (43.33%)	30/84 (35.71%)
Orthopedic Surgery	15/60 (25%)	60/168 (35.71%)
Otolaryngology	5/17 (29.41%)	17/55 (30.90%)
Radiation Oncology	14/27 (51.85%)	27/60 (45%)
Urology	6/15 (40%)	15/61 (24.59%)

Results: Driving Factors

Economic factors:

- ❖ losses in investment portfolios have prompted some physicians to postpone their retirement;
- ❖ changing priorities and concomitant decreased spending have resulted in less hospital hiring and allocation of operating room time and resources.

"It's expensive to open up operating rooms. ... in Canada, a hospital views you as an expense because you're bringing in patients that are going to take money away from the capital budget of the hospital, because they're going to use resources. ... So we're not looked upon as 'Oh, great! You're bringing in more patients!' It's kind of like, 'Oh, please don't bring more.'"
- Program Director, ENT



Health System/Structural factors:

- ❖ Increased reliance on residents to perform varying aspects of 'call service' and patient care impact jobs previously open to new graduates;
- ❖ misalignment between needs-based provincial workforce plans and residency intake is resulting in some 'oversupply';
- ❖ some compensation models for hospital-based specialist teams do not incentivize creation of new positions;
- ❖ certain interprofessional care models and changing scopes of practice among new and existing health professions have decreased the need for specialist positions by reducing duplication of clinical roles.

"...some of the programs are taking residents not so much because they need to train that many residents, but because they need to fill spots on the call schedule. And I understand that. But at the end of the day that means we have X number of residents being trained and not necessarily enough jobs for them when they finish. And historically about half of our grads end up going to the U.S."
- Program Director, Neurosurgery

Results: Driving Factors

Individual/Contextual factors:

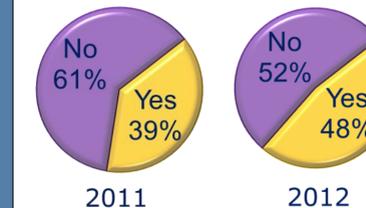
Influencers of work location of new graduates include desire to be in the same city as spouse/partner and family members and preference for a particular city or academic center.

Job Placement Survey (2011-12): Why do you feel you do not have a job placement?



Lack of career counseling was also thought to be detrimental to obtaining employment following graduation (only 39% received in 2011 and 48% in 2012).

Job Placement Survey: During Training, did you receive career counseling?



"I don't want to sound pretentious or anything like that, but after having training in Neurosurgery, ..., plus a fellowship from a prestigious (US) location, I don't think I should go to a small community hospital to do straightforward general Neurosurgery procedures... I would [prefer] go to a larger centre in the United States, where I could have a better lifestyle and do the practice that I wanted." - Senior Resident, Neurosurgery

Conclusion

The drivers of unemployment and underemployment are multifactorial and complex. Findings of the first phase of our research will be released in spring 2013, available online at www.royalcollege.ca. Ongoing research is needed to examine specialty and jurisdiction-specific trends in more detail to avoid, among others, over-correction in enrolment quotas. As such, the Royal College will continue its study to create a more comprehensive picture of this issue and encourage broad dialogue among stakeholders.