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*Terrence McDonald, MD, MSc; **Jessie Hart Szostakiwskyj, MSc; ***Lee A. Green, MD, MPH

ABSTRACT

In recent years, questions have surfaced about whether Alberta has a stable supply of primary care physicians (PCPs – family physicians [FP] and general practitioners [GP]). There is anecdotal evidence of some PCPs leaving the province to practice elsewhere, retire, or limit their practice. Community PCPs in Alberta have faced a number of challenges providing care for increasingly complex patients in a political environment that has made many consider practice options elsewhere. Demographic data from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta for all PCPs from 2018, 2020 and 2022 were analyzed and described. PCPs were reported by year, years in practice, country of medical school graduation and sex. From 2018 to 2022 the number of PCPs increased from 4949 to 5540. There was an increase in the number of PCPs 31+ years since medical school graduation from 1340 to 1446, representing a quarter of the workforce supply. However, the number of PCPs 0-5 years since medical school graduation declined from 592 to 476. The proportion of FPs who graduated from a Canadian medical school also declined 76.3% (2768) to 68.9% (3035). Over one quarter of the PCP workforce in Alberta is nearing retirement age. The decline in new PCPs (0-5 years since medical school graduation) entering practice offers evidence to support concerns of a growing deficit in primary care availability in this province.

Keywords: family physician, health human resources, workforce supply; retrospective analysis.

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Author(s) Affiliations: *Assistant Professor, Departments of Family Medicine and Community Health Sciences, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary; **Analyst, Clinical Research Unit, University of Calgary; ***Professor, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta.

Author Contact: terrence.mcdonald@ucalgary.ca.

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