



Pulse

MDs second on honesty scale, lawyers and politicians lag

A recent Gallup poll indicates that Canadians still consider physicians to be among the country's most honest and ethical professionals. The survey, conducted in March, revealed that more than 60% of respondents rated the honesty and ethical standards of physicians as either high or very high. Pharmacists/druggists were the only professionals deemed more trustworthy than physicians, with 68% of respondents giving them a high or very high rating.

An honesty and ethics score was calculated for each profession based on the percentage of high/very high responses minus the percentage of low/very low answers. The scores for pharmacists and physicians were +65 and +56, respectively. Engineers followed with a score of +46; police officers scored +45. Journalists and lawyers both had negative scores of -3 and -11, respectively. This marked the first time that journalists have not received a positive score, but lawyers have not been on the positive side of the ledger since 1987. Members of Parliament and labour union leaders shared the worst score, -22. Only 14% of respondents rated the honesty and ethical standards of MPs as being high or very high.

Assessment of honesty and ethical standards, by profession

Profession	High/very high (%)	Net score
Pharmacists/Druggists	68	+65
Doctors	62	+56
Engineers	50	+46
Police officers	53	+45
University teachers	45	+39
Clergy	44	+32
Accountants	37	+30
Public opinion pollsters	28	+17
Business executives	21	+5
Journalists	21	-3
Lawyers	19	-11
Real estate agents	15	-12
Advertising executives	14	-16
Members of Parliament	14	-22
Labour union leaders	15	-22

Source: Mar. 18-23, 1999, Gallup Poll, Gallup Canada Inc.

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

Bangladeshi university wins CMAJ subscriptions



Dr. Fariduddin Shariff photo

The University of Science and Technology in Chittagong, Bangladesh, has been awarded 3-year subscriptions to *CMAJ* and its sister publication, the *Canadian Journal of Surgery* (see *CMAJ* 1999;160:63-4). It was nominated by Winnipeg orthopedic surgeon Fariduddin Shariff, who visited the city in 1997; the country's physician-to-patient ratio is about 1:5000.

Hunger strikers protest First Nations health care

Four First Nations chiefs in northwest Ontario began a hunger strike in April to protest the poor level of health care in their region. To turn up the pressure, they invited the World Health Organization (WHO) to tour the area.

The Sioux Lookout Zone Hospital, which is administered federally to provide health care to the area's predominantly native population, was virtually closed earlier this year due to a severe shortage of physicians and nurses. The zone hospital serves about 15 000 people in the Sioux Lookout area, some 400 km northwest of Thunder Bay. Residents of the area now must travel hundreds of kilometres, to places like Dryden or Thunder Bay, to receive basic services.

Allan Rock, the federal minister, set up a working group of government and native officials to solve the hospital's problems, and its final report is due July 30. Meanwhile, area residents have taken matters into their own hands.

"[We want to] bring them [WHO] up to see the conditions and view firsthand how First Nations are treated," said regional chief Tom Bressette in a recent interview. Canada has twice been rebuked by the UN for shoddy treatment of aboriginal peoples. The Sioux Lookout chiefs hope the threat of another black eye on the international stage will inspire government officials to solve the shortage.

Attracting professionals could prove challenging. The town's remoteness is illustrated by a recent nursing job posting: "Candidates must be willing to travel over rough roads for long distances, to fly by small plane or helicopter, or to travel by boat, [perhaps] in inclement weather." —

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