

Almost all physicians have embraced computer use, survey shows

More than 4 in 5 Canadian physicians (84%) now use computers personally, up slightly from 79% in 1999, the CMA's 2000 Physician Resource Questionnaire (PRQ) indicates.

Female physicians, who have traditionally been less likely to use comput-

ers, are now virtually neck-and-neck with their male colleagues. In 1999, 73% of female physicians and 81% of male physicians personally used computers; today the proportions are 83% and 84%, respectively. Rural physicians lag only slightly behind their urban col-

leagues, with 81% reporting that they personally use computers, compared with 84% of urban doctors.

Computer use among physicians aged 65 and over remains unchanged from last year (54%), but for all other age groups the proportion has increased since 1999. The proportion of computer users among physicians younger than 45 is approaching 90%. The PRQ was mailed to a random sample of 8000 physicians. — *Shelley Martin, CMAJ*

A losing battle against child poverty?

The number of children living in poverty is growing despite an all-party federal promise to eliminate the problem by 2000, the Canadian Institute of Child Health says. And it says the ramifications are enormous: 35% of children in low-income families live in substandard housing, and these children are twice as likely to need remedial education programs and are at greater risk of psychosocial problems, injury and death by fire or homicide.

The CICH's recently released report, *The Health of Canada's Children* (third edition), also sounds the alarm over the growing disparity between rich and poor families. In 1981, the richest 10% of families had average incomes of \$122 000 a year; by 1996 this had increased to \$138 000. Meanwhile, the income for the poorest 10% of families remained the same — \$14 000 a year. "It's obscene," said CICH spokesperson Dr. Graham Chance. "You cannot possibly support healthy child development on this income." Indeed, children represent about 27% of Canada's population, yet between 31% and 54% of the people who rely on Canada's food banks are children. Aboriginal children are the most vulnerable, with half of those under age 15 living in poverty. — *Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ*