

## LETTERS

### Canada needs twice as many palliative specialists

Regarding “Canada needs twice as many palliative specialists,”<sup>1</sup> the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) agrees that Canadians deserve high-quality, compassionate palliative care. We also acknowledge that there must be better coverage of palliative care services. However, the role of the family physician is glaringly and worryingly absent from this article.

Although not every community has enough family physicians (this is why the CFPC has actively advocated for a family doctor for everyone in Canada delivering care through the Patient’s Medical Home), those communities with a family physician can manage more than 90% of that population’s palliative care needs. That’s a significant figure not acknowledged in the *CMAJ* article.

This matters because family physicians receive palliative care training as part of their medical education. To ignore

this contribution is a disservice to physicians and to the patients they serve.

Finally, it is faulty to focus strictly on the level of training of physicians as a primary reason for a dearth of palliative care services in some communities. In fact, good care at the end of life also requires other health providers, well-resourced home care and other community services, and support for caregivers.

The Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians report referenced in the article touches on many of these comments. It would have been helpful to recognize the important contribution of family doctors.

#### Jennifer Hall MD

Past-President, College of Family Physicians of Canada, Mississauga, Ont.

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2017 January 16;189:E81.  
doi: 10.1503/cmaj.732498

#### Reference

1. Vogel L. Canada needs twice as many palliative specialists. [Epub ahead of print 2016; Nov. 14]. *CMAJ* 10.1503/cmaj.109-5354.