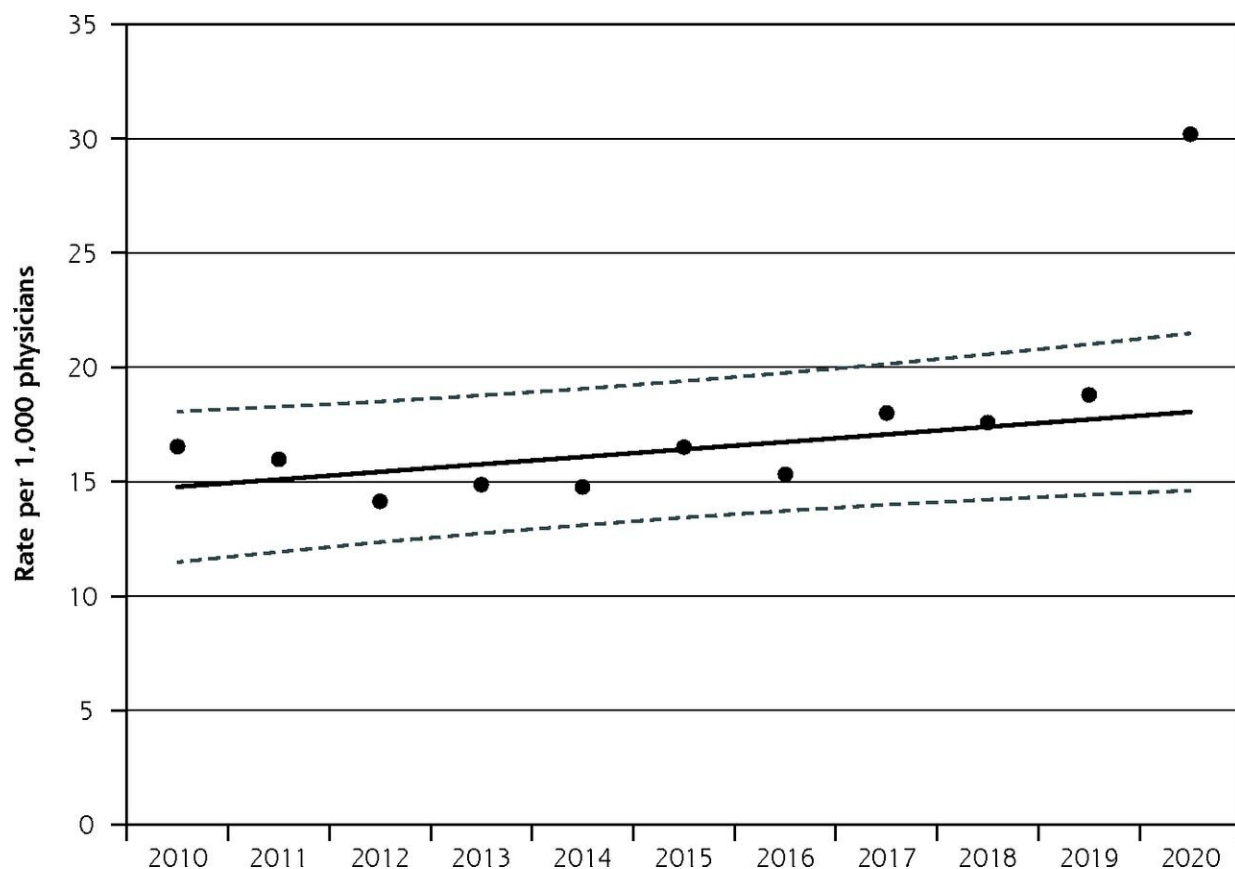


# Nearly twice as many Ontario family physicians stopped work in early COVID-19 pandemic compared to previous years

September 27 2022



Number of family physicians per 1,000 who were actively practicing from January to March in a given year but who had 0 primary care visits between April and September of that year, 2010-2020. Observed numbers and fitted regression line with 95% CIs. Credit: *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2022). DOI: 10.1370/afm.2865

Family physicians in Ontario, Canada, faced significant challenges in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, including reduced revenue, decreased retention of office staff, difficulty obtaining personal protective equipment, and decreased morale.

Researchers conducted two analyses using billing claims data to better understand the number and characteristics of physicians who stopped work in the first six months of the pandemic and whether more family physicians in Ontario stopped working during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to pre-pandemic years.

The researchers found that 3.1% of physicians working in 2019 (385 out of 12,247 doctors) reported no billings in the first six months of the pandemic. Compared with other family physicians, a higher portion were aged 75 or older; had fee-for-service reimbursement; had a patient panel size of under 500; and worked less than other physicians in the previous year.

The rate at which [family physicians](#) stopped working rose from an average of 1.6% for the years between 2010 and 2019 to 3% who stopped working in 2020.

Although the absolute number of physicians stopping work was small, the impact on patients and communities is substantial considering Canada, like the U.S., is experiencing a primary care physician shortage. If this trend holds true in other communities, the COVID-19 pandemic may have further exacerbated the primary care physician shortage.

The research was published in *The Annals of Family Medicine*.

**More information:** Tara Kiran et al, Family Physicians Stopping Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ontario, Canada, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2865](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2865)

Provided by American Academy of Family Physicians

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