

## **78<sup>TH</sup> ACFAS CONGRESS: THE AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES**

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The presentation by Roger Farley and Roger Guillemette of Health Canada, given during the 78<sup>th</sup> Acfas Congress in May 2010, reviewed the findings of a study released by Statistics Canada in April 2009 which provided a portrait of health-care professionals according to their competency in Canada's two official languages. The presentation, which was based on data from the longform census questionnaire, assessed the number of health professionals who use the minority language at work or who have indicated that they can converse in the minority language, as well as the changes in the number of these health professionals between 2001 and 2006.

The presentation was based on a paper commissioned by Health Canada which can be viewed at the Internet address below. Health Canada's interest in this project followed from the recommendation that a gap analysis be conducted to identify areas of deficit of health professionals both by health profession specialization and geographical location. The recommendation was part of the 2008 evaluation of Health Canada's initiative to support training and retention of health professionals for English- and French-language minority communities in Canada.

Three measures were used to identify language skills among health care professionals: the first official language spoken, use of the minority language at work, and the ability to conduct a conversation in the minority language. The presentation illustrated the proportional availability of health professionals in different regions of Quebec who can converse in English and the availability of health professionals who can speak French in other provinces and territories.

The study confirms that English-speaking physicians in Quebec are more highly concentrated in Montreal than elsewhere in the province and that the ability to speak English among other health professionals is also highest in Montreal. The two-year comparisons showed an overall increase in English competency and use of English among all

Quebec health professionals between 2001 and 2006. Within regions of Quebec, the proportion of English-speaking health professionals declined most in the southern and Estrie regions of Quebec, where the proportion of English-speaking persons was also in decline over the same period.

The presenters cautioned that the results do not enable us to conclude which portion of the Quebec English-speaking population has access to health services in their chosen language.

Presentation based on the following paper:

*Health Care Professionals and Official-Language Minorities in Canada, 2001 and 2006* (April 2009),

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91550x/91550x2008001eng.pdf>