

Characterizing Addiction Medicine Training in Canada: A Mixed Methods Study of Fellowship Program Directors

Category: Poster Presentation (in person)

Abstract Body

BACKGROUND: The supply of physicians adequately trained in Addiction Medicine greatly lags the demand, which leads to a wide evidence-to-practice gap. While Addiction Medicine fellowship programs in Canada have evolved substantially, little is known about the strengths and challenges of these programs. Understanding the training landscape will be critical to matching Addiction Medicine education to the needs of people who use substances.

OBJECTIVE: We aim to richly characterize the current state of Addiction Medicine fellowship programs in Canada to inform future medical education efforts.

METHODS: As the first phase of a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, we conducted an online survey of Program Directors of Addiction Medicine fellowship programs across Canada using the survey platform Qualtrics. Through descriptive statistics, we analyzed quantitative data related to applicants, trainees, faculty, accreditation, curriculum design, and program challenges, and funding. Here we present findings from the survey (quantitative phase) only, which will subsequently inform a semi-structured interview of Program Directors (qualitative phase).

RESULTS: Twelve Addiction Medicine Program Directors completed our survey. Since 2019, the number of fellowship programs doubled from 6 to 12. These include 8 Enhanced Skills programs eligible only to Family Medicine trainees, 3 Area of Focused Competence programs eligible to specialties other than Family Medicine, and 2 Addiction Psychiatry programs. Programs were geographically concentrated in 5 of the 13 provinces and territories of Canada.

There was considerable variation in program sizes (1-11 fellowship positions annually). Programs considered 91 applications for 28 positions in 2021-22 and 111 applications for 32 positions in 2022-23 (28.8-30.8% acceptance rate). The majority of fellows (>60%) entered fellowship with a training background in Family Medicine. Ninety percent of Program Directors perceived that demand for their graduates was very high. With high applicant interest and very high perceived demand, Program Directors rated funding for qualified applicants as the most important need.

CONCLUSIONS: Amid evolving training standards and an impressive growth of Addiction Medicine fellowship programs across Canada, Program Directors stressed both the difficulty and importance of acquiring sufficient funding for fellowship positions to meet the current and future needs of people who use substances.

Key Words

- Caring in Crisis
- Education
- Future

Learning Objective # 1

Understand the current state of Addiction Medicine training programs in Canada through descriptive statistics

Learning Objective # 2

Appreciate emerging themes and areas of opportunities in Addiction Medicine training programs in Canada through qualitative data

Reference # 1

McEachern J, Ahamad K, Nolan S, Mead A, Wood E, Klimas J. A Needs Assessment of the Number of Comprehensive Addiction Care Physicians Required in a Canadian Setting. *J Addict Med.* 2016 Aug;10(4):255–61.

Reference # 2

Derefinko K, Brown R, Danzo A, Foster S, Brennan T, Hand S, Kunz K. Addiction Medicine Training Fellowships in North America: A Recent Assessment of Progress and Needs. *J Addict Med.* 2020 Aug;14(4):e103-e109.

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