
Inventory of National Rural Health Research Related Databases

Database name: **National Physician Database**

Thematic Coverage: This database collects data on fee-for-service physician payments in Canada.

Maintained by: CIHI

Availability: Data disclosure is determined by CIHI's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy (see www.cihi.ca). If privacy and confidentiality criteria are met, data can be released at the sub-provincial level. All data are subject to a provincially imposed access policy and the NPDB Transfer Plan. Access depends on the type of client, the type of data, the level of aggregation, and the province of interest. Costs are dependent upon the level data required, plus programming and processing fees.

Start Date: 1972 – Medical Care Database
1989 – National Physician Database

Release Date: Approximately 2 years after reference period (year ending June 30)

Frequency of collection: Annual

Data Collection: Data obtained from provincial and territorial medical care health insurance plans.

Sample size: All fee-for-service physicians (approximately 89% of Canadian physicians)

Geographic coverage: All provinces and territories

Lowest geographic level collected: Postal Code of physician except for those in Alberta. The postal code is meant to identify the physicians' area of main activity. Instead of postal code information, Alberta physicians are described in terms of CMAs, CAs or communities defined by population size.

Lowest geographic level of release: Forward Sortation Area or Enumeration Area depending on request

Existing rural variable: No

Rural definitions that can be constructed from this database include (building block)[†]:

✓ Census "rural areas"	(Enumeration Area)
✓ Rural and Small Town definition	(Census Subdivision)
✓ Metropolitan area and census agglomeration Influenced Zones	(Census Subdivision)
✓ OECD "rural communities" definition	(Census Consolidated Subdivision)
✓ OECD "predominantly rural regions" definition	(Census Division)
✓ Ehrensaft's "Beale codes"	(Census Division)

[†] Results for these areas of geography could conceivably be derived from postal codes if respondent confidentiality is ensured.

Data elements:

- Socio-demographic data for fee-for-service physicians
- Billing activities of the physicians
- Age and sex of patients.

Notes:

In 1987, the Conference of Deputy Ministers of Health approved the creation of the National Physician Database to facilitate physician resource and service utilization planning. NPDB built on the existing Medical Care Database (MCDB) created in the early 1970s to monitor physician payments under the Medical Care Act (1968).

NPDB's predecessor, the Medical Care Database contains numbers of services provided (by billing code) and amounts paid on a fee-for-service basis to physicians, accompanied by the number of physicians by specialty, for most provinces.

For more information, contact npdb@cihi.ca