

## A Day in the Life

What does a day in the life of a rural family physician really look like? Many people see us for 15 minutes at a time, and assume that those face to face interactions are what comprise our job. A typical day starts around 7:30AM. We round on our inpatients, reviewing labs, meeting with nursing, homecare, social work, physiotherapy, etc. with the aim of providing excellent healthcare to our inpatients, and ensuring that all of the steps are in place for a safe discharge home. Then we return to our clinics around 8:30 and start to prepare to see patients at 9am. This includes reading through labs and documents (such as specialist letters, x-ray reports, etc) and then previewing our days' appointments so that we can be prepared for our patients when they arrive. We each have an inbox of communications that need to be dealt with as well. These include letters from home care, from pharmacies, from insurance companies, all which need to be filled out in our spare moments of time. Once we begin seeing patients, we quickly start to fall behind. Our 15 minute appointment, enough time to address a number of issues, often 3-5, plus screening options, which we are obligated to offer to patients as it is often in their best interests to pursue them. Then patients often have last minute procedures they would like, for example, I just need a few skin spots sprayed, or, this skin spot, should we biopsy this? Or can we cut this skin spot out? Suddenly that time you've scheduled as 15 minutes, becomes 30 minutes. As you try to juggle your first patient in the procedure room, while seeing your next patient, you get a phone call from a specialist - you've been waiting for days to hear from them! So we drop what we're doing and take the call. But we still have a patient waiting for their procedure, and another in a room that is having a mental health crisis, and now another one has just been roomed. It's 9:45 and you're already 30 minutes behind in your day. It would be amazing to have a coffee break at 10, as we've been working since 7:30. We don't get a coffee break. Then we desperately try to stay on top of addressing patient concerns, and attempting to make up time, out of respect for patients and

THEIR schedules. We just start to catch up, and another phone call! It's from homecare. One of your patients at Vista isn't doing well, and may need to come into the hospital, what would you like them to do? You answer. Hang up the phone, and it rings again. Another specialist call. This one is complicated and takes 15 minutes. You still have a patient in the procedure room, two in your offices, one in tears. Typically, you work into a good portion of your lunch. A full 1 hour lunch break almost never happens. On a good day you get 30 minutes. Most days it's 10 minutes. Then your afternoon begins and we repeat this whole process. That patient you have been providing maternity care to comes in in labour. So now you must continually run back and forth between patients in clinic and the laboring mama, to help deliver this baby safely into her mother's arms. Unfortunately, labor is not progressing, and you need to perform a C-section. You call 3 more physicians to perform the anesthesia, surgery, help assist, and one baby-doc. The clinic day is still progressing and you are frantically running back and forth to the clinic to continue to see patients while the operating room gets set up. The c-section goes well, but it all takes time, and many of your clinic patients, as well as those of you colleagues, have to reschedule their patients as well. Once you are done with seeing patients, it's time to finish charting. This easily takes another hour. Oh, and those labs and documents, they continued to pile up through the day, and because a couple colleagues are away, you now have 100 labs and 100 documents to go through, and a referral letter or three to write. It'll be another night of going to the gym, going back to work, and working until 8:30 or 9 so that you can finish the work that if you don't address tonight, will just pile up tomorrow.