

Two-thirds of region's doctors turning patients away

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although there is no proof they serve any purpose.

"We need somebody with the will and the fortitude to draw the line and say, 'We're not doing this anymore. It serves no purpose,'" he said.

"We should compile a list of services that are medically necessary and that's all we pay for. People pay themselves if they want treatment beyond that. We can't give everybody a Rolls Royce. They don't need a Rolls Royce. They need transportation."

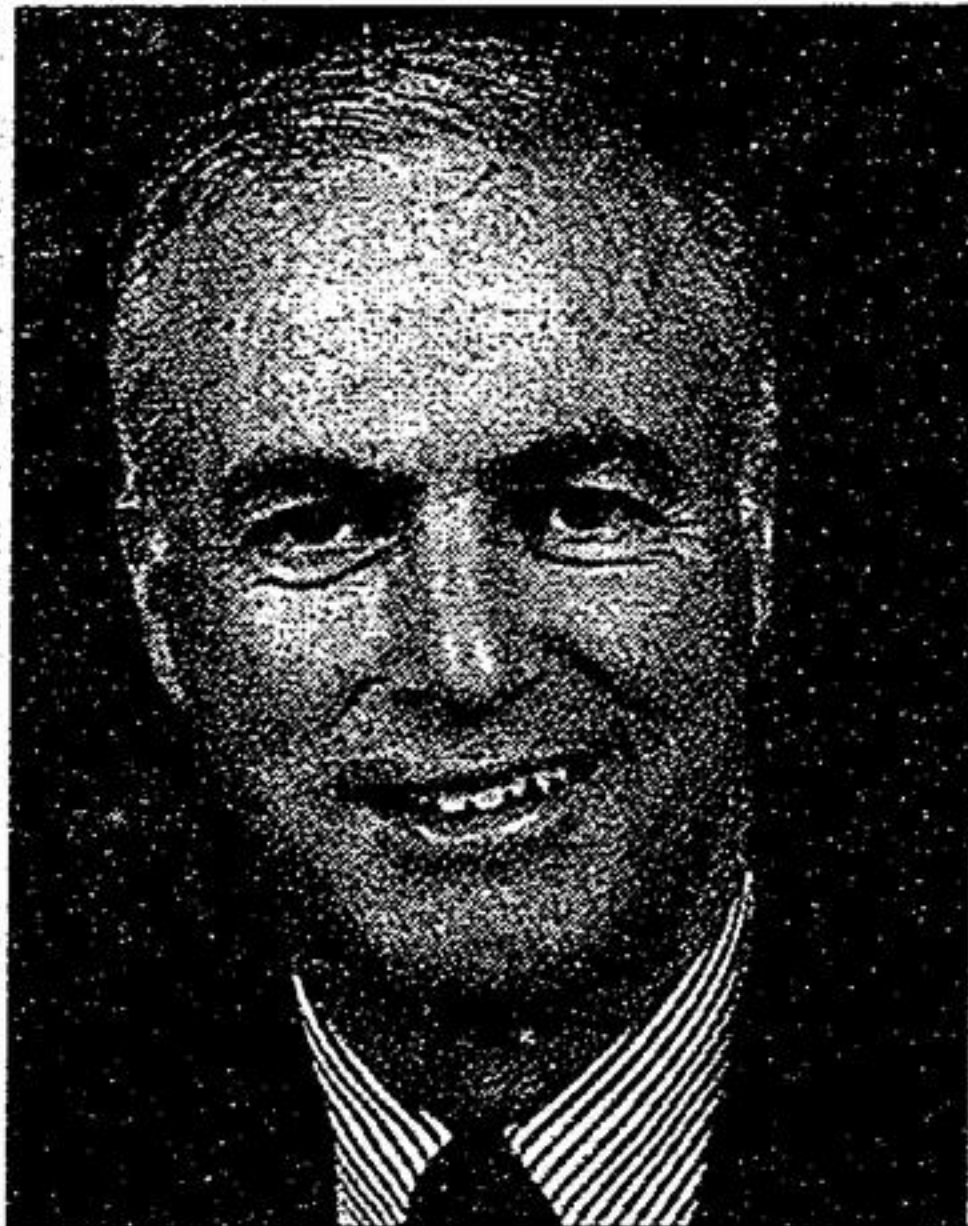
Dr. MacLean and Dr. Seiden were responding to a report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which detailed the reasons why doctors across the country are in short supply.

Dr. Ben Chan, who authored the study, said many Canadians now report challenges in finding a family doctor. Two-thirds of doctors in York Region, for instance, are turning patients away.

At the same time, Dr. Chan said waiting lists to see specialists are common.

"I think York Region is now feeling it and will really feel it for the next couple of years."

Yet, just 10 years ago, he said despite projections of a growing and aging population, medical school positions were cut, physicians were encouraged to retire and foreign doctors were discouraged from com-



DR. JIM MACLEAN: Government action to increase number of doctors will take time, hospital president says.

training after graduation rather than one. Also, after 1993 there were more specialists being trained compared to family doctors and specialists spend more time training.

Dr. MacLean said governments have been taking steps to increase the ranks of doctors, but the efforts will take time to pay off.

"I think in health care and other human services, you're always playing a catch-up game. It's difficult to stay ahead of it," he added.

"I think York Region is now feeling it and will really feel it for the next couple of years."

Dr. MacLean also argued governments must be aggressive in pursuing other options for health care such as nurse practitioners who can diagnose and prescribe medicine within guidelines.

ing to Canada.

Between 1993 and 2000, Canada lost more than 5,000 physicians, leaving 900,000 Ontario residents without family doctors.

Dr. Chan blamed 11 per cent of the doctor shortage on medical school enrolment cuts, a finding he called surprising because these cuts are frequently cited as the leading cause of the physician shortage.

Meanwhile, 22 per cent of the shortage can be attributed to fewer foreign doctors entering Canada and another 17 per cent was due to the number of doctors retiring.

However, the biggest contributor, at 25 per cent, was an increase in the amount of time doctors spent in post-graduate training.

After 1993, doctors wanting to practise family medicine were required to get two years of extra

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