

# Palliative Care Doctor

The doctor for people with serious illness, focused on comfort, pain and time with family. One of the shorter specialist paths, and emotionally the hardest.

## TYPICAL PAY

**\$250,000**

a year, full time

## PAY RANGE

**\$170k to \$380k**

starting to experienced

## TIME TO QUALIFY

**9 to 13 years**

after high school

## DEMAND

**Very high**

job outlook

## LICENCE NEEDED

**Yes**

regulated job

## WHERE YOU WORK

**Hospices, hospital palliative units, home visits, cancer centres**

## How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12  
Top marks in biology, chemistry, math and English. You need a very high average for a science undergrad.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 3 to 4 years  
Any major works. Keep a GPA (grade point average) above 3.8, volunteer, do research. Write the MCAT (medical school admission test).
- 3 Medical school, the MD (doctor of medicine)** 3 to 4 years  
Acceptance rates are 5% to 15%. Classes, then clinical rotations. Ask for a palliative elective; most schools have one.
- 4 Family medicine residency** 2 years  
Matched through CaRMS (the residency matching service). Clinics, wards, emergency, obstetrics. Palliative rotations are built in. Pass the CCFP exam (family medicine certification) and register with your provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons.
- 5 Palliative care training** 1 to 2 years  
A third year of family medicine enhanced skills in hospices, palliative units and home care, leading to a CAC (Certificate of Added Competence) in palliative care. The other route: a 2-year Royal College subspecialty in palliative medicine after internal medicine, pediatri...

## Pros and cons

- + One of the shortest routes to a specialist role
- + The work matters and families tell you so
- + More regular hours than most of medicine
- The emotional load is real and it builds
- Pays less than procedure-heavy specialties
- You cannot fix a shortage of home care or hospice beds

## Good to know

### 58% of Canadians who died got palliative care

CIHI (Canadian Institute for Health Information) data cited by Pallium Canada shows 58% of people who died in 2021 to 2022 received some palliative care. That is up from 5 years earlier, but it still leaves...

### Palliative does not mean giving up

Health Canada describes palliative care as support for serious illness at any age and in any setting. It can start at diagnosis, alongside treatment, not only in the last days.

## Optional boosts

Home-based palliative care. Pediatric palliative care. Cancer centre consult service. MAID (medical assistance in dying).

### Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Medical specialists, wages (updated Nov 2025)  
College of Family Physicians of Canada  
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada  
CIHI: Access to palliative care in Canada

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/palliative-care-doctor>



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