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# The President's Letter

*Dr. Christopher J.(Chip) Doig*



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Dear Member:

## **Patients and physicians aligned on health care issues**

Recently the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) commissioned public research on attitudes towards health issues, then posed a number of the same questions to AMA members. The findings show that there's strong alignment between the views of the public, our patients and physicians; and physicians support innovation.

- Wait times at 49% and doctor shortages/lack of access to a doctor at 36% are the two major health care issues for Albertans. Physicians concur.
- Both the public (87%) and physicians (86%) agree it's important to look at the roles of doctors, nurses and pharmacists.
- Both the public (95%) and physicians (84%) strongly support health care guarantees for waiting times, and both also support (public 79% and physicians 69%) a patient's charter that outlines what Albertans can expect from their health care system.

In general, there was strong support for the proposals the AMA has put forward to the Minister's Advisory Committee that is developing recommendations for a legislative framework for the health care system.

Health care continues to be a key issue with the public, with access being a central concern. All providers must explore opportunities for improving access and accountability in the health care system. The AMA has engaged Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services (AHS) in preliminary discussions on some possible ideas for improving access; for example, opportunities provided by electronic medical records, telemedicine, and the coordination of care between providers.

The AMA will be bolstering its engagement and communication with members, sections and zone medical associations; will continue to build relationships with MLAs and with various groups and organizations; and will build its profile in the Alberta and social media.

### **Contracting for health services**

After becoming CEO of Alberta Health Services, Stephen Duckett, PhD, made known his intention to contract out for more clinical services. Recently, AHS commissioned a study into options for doing so ("A Competitive Process for Procuring Health Services: A Review of Principles with an Application to Cataract Services" to view, click on:

[http://wcmprod2.ucalgary.ca/publicpolicy/files/publicpolicy/Dranove%20ONLINE%20\(Dec%2009\).pdf](http://wcmprod2.ucalgary.ca/publicpolicy/files/publicpolicy/Dranove%20ONLINE%20(Dec%2009).pdf)

Application of some of the contracting options proposed in the study appears in the recently released AHS request for proposal for ophthalmology surgical services. The AMA will be working with the Section of Ophthalmology in considering the implications of this new process to help ensure that it is fair to all.

Over the years the AMA has conducted considerable research into contracting out for clinical services. As well, the Board of Directors has endorsed a physician compensation strategy which has included the role of contracting out of services.

### **April 1, 2010 allocation**

As I reported in a previous *President's Letter*, the AMA's Board of Directors approved a number of recommendations for the April 1, 2010 allocation. These recommendations have now been discussed with the other parties to the Trilateral Agreement and the allocation has been approved. This meets the timelines required to ensure that the fee allocation is implemented on schedule.

Both the eight-year trilateral master agreement with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness and the current three-year fiscal amending agreement expire March 31, 2011.

### **Holiday greetings**

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff at the AMA, best wishes for you and yours for the imminent holiday season and a Happy New Year!

May the recent bitterly cold temperatures be offset by warm celebrations with family and friends over the coming weeks - and whether you are at home or away, I look forward to writing to you again in 2010!

Yours truly,

Christopher J. (Chip) Doig, MD, MSc, FRCPC  
President