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# The President's Letter

Dr. Darryl D. LaBuick



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December 13, 2007

Dear Member:

I would like to update you on the status of Retention Benefit and Clinical Stabilization Initiative payments and inform you about current activities under way to prepare for the next allocation.

## **Retention Benefit**

As scheduled, the Alberta Medical Association (AMA)-administered Retention Benefit Program is preparing to provide retention benefit payments to eligible physicians in February 2008.

## **Clinical Stabilization Initiative**

### ***Business Costs Program payments***

If all goes well with the testing of the Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW) computer system this month, Business Costs Program (BCP) payments are expected to begin to be paid in early January for eligible fee-for-service claims.

Retroactive payments, for eligible fee-for-service claims with dates of service from September 1, 2007 to the date the system begins to operate, are also expected to be sent out in early January. Retroactive payments for alternate relationship plan physicians will occur at a later date, which is to be determined.

If computer system defects are uncovered in the December user testing, payments will be delayed until the issues are remedied.

AHW is changing its computer system so that Business Costs Program payments can be automatically applied to physician payments for eligible services provided in office-based practices.

A new report – *Business Costs Program Details* – will identify each eligible BCP claim. Payments will be issued to physicians through the designated payee assigned on their Business Arrangement Numbers and will be reflected on their Statements of Account. The new report will be sent out with the retroactive payments, which may mean large volumes of reconciliation for some physicians.

For further information about the BCP, go to [www.albertadoctors.org/FeesNegotiations/BusinessCostsProgram](http://www.albertadoctors.org/FeesNegotiations/BusinessCostsProgram) to see the list of eligible health service codes and complexity modifiers. **Please note:** Complexity modifiers are only applicable to the specific codes to which they have always applied.

### ***Rural, Remote, Northern Program payments***

Rural, Remote, Northern Program (RRNP) payments are not expected to be available until spring 2008 at the earliest. AMA, AHW and the regional health authorities (RHAs) will begin this month to determine the computer system changes required to process RRNP payments.

The decisions and subsequent steps required will determine the timelines for these payments. We will keep members informed about payment timelines as information becomes available.

As with the BCP, RRNP payments will be retroactive for claims with dates of service from September 1 and after.

### **Allocation process under way for Negotiations 2008**

At its fall meeting the AMA Representative Forum discussed and supported the current AMA allocation process, passing resolutions that were reviewed by the AMA Board of Directors in November.

Allocation is on an ongoing activity at the AMA – as one allocation is being completed, work is beginning on section allocation requests for the next agreement. AMA staff have been meeting with section representatives since early September to ensure that representatives understand the allocation process and to discuss specific issues for the Negotiations 2008 allocation.

Staff have met with 29 of the 30 sections that have primary economic roles. Based on discussions between sections and AMA staff, sectional allocation proposals have been prepared. The AMA Fees Advisory Committee reviewed the proposals at its December 10 meeting.

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The trilateral Schedule of Medical Benefits Subcommittee, with AMA, AHW and RHA representatives, will review the allocations proposals December 17.

If you have ideas about where you would like your section to designate a portion of its funds for fee increases, now is the time to contact your section executive to begin discussions for **future** proposals and **future** allocations. Section presidents are listed on the AMA website. Go to [www.albertadoctors.org/InsideAMA/Sections](http://www.albertadoctors.org/InsideAMA/Sections).

### **AMA's uninsured services guide**

Watch your mailbox in late January for a copy of the AMA's new *Guidelines to billing uninsured services*. As a service to members, the AMA provides updated guidelines every few years. The booklet is expected to be printed later this month.

If you have questions or concerns you would like to discuss, please contact me by email at [president@albertadoctors.org](mailto:president@albertadoctors.org). Expressing your concerns keeps me informed of grassroots issues affecting physicians across the province.

Yours truly,

Darryl D. LaBuick, MD, CCFP  
President