

The President's Letter

Dr. Darryl D. LaBuick



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June 19, 2008

Dear Member:

Recently the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) forwarded 28 recommendations for a provincial pharmaceutical strategy to Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert. This was a first step in providing the input requested by Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW) on this important topic. We anticipate further extensive dialogue with AHW prior to implementation of a provincial strategy.

The AMA provincial pharmaceutical recommendations address a number of issues including:

1. Control of drug costs
2. Process for drug approval and transparency of decisions (physician input, clinical effectiveness in drug evaluations, transparency of pharmaceutical companies' research, conflict of interest, etc.)
3. Disclosure of individual provider prescribing information
4. Reference-based drug pricing
5. Reimbursing physicians for special authorization forms
6. Controls on drug promotion (advertising, appropriate relationships, etc.)
7. Professional roles in prescribing – scopes of practice, education
8. National pharmaceutical strategy

Go to: www.albertadoctors.org/AMA/ProvPharmaStrategy to read the AMA recommendations and rationale for each.

The AMA's report resulted from three resolutions at the Fall 2007 Representative Forum (RF):

- "THAT the AMA develop a policy statement providing wide-ranging recommendations on a provincial pharmaceutical strategy that would address the problems of high cost drugs, orphaned drugs, access to medications and catastrophic drug costs."

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- “THAT the AMA develop policies and processes to negotiate with government for funded patient access to necessary medication for good clinical practice from government established plans such as Blue Cross so that physicians can put Patients First®.”
- “THAT the AMA board request the Minister of Health and Wellness to provide greater physician participation in the Expert Advisory Committee on drugs, and to ensure transparency for committee decisions.”

Members of the AMA committee that developed our recommendations for a provincial strategy were: Chair Dr. Tzu-Kuang (T.K.) Lee, internal medicine; Dr. Isabelle Chiu, infectious diseases; Dr. Leslie R. Cunning, rural general practice; Dr. Dale C. Lien, respiratory medicine; Dr. Paul L. Toye, urban general practice; AMA staff: Dr. William S. Hnydyk, Assistant Executive Director, Professional Affairs; and Dr. Lyle B. Mittelsteadt, Senior Medical Advisor, Professional Affairs.

As well, on behalf of the AMA, I extend our sincere appreciation to the British Columbia Medical Association (BCMA) for assisting the AMA committee that developed our pharmaceutical recommendations. The committee used the BCMA policy paper *A Prescription for Quality*, as a starting point and excellent reference for its discussion of pharmaceutical issues.

The AMA's provincial pharmaceutical strategy recommendations put Patients First®, address the RF resolutions and contribute to AHW's development of a provincial strategy.

Yours truly,

Darryl D. LaBuick, MD, CCFP
President