



# The President's Letter

*Dr. Noel W. Grisdale*



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April 22, 2009

Dear Member:

## **Primary Care Initiative (PCI) call for letters of intent**

The PCI program has issued an ongoing and open call for letters of intent to all Alberta family physicians who are not already involved in a primary care network (PCN). With 30 primary care networks now up and running in Alberta and seven groups of family physicians working with Alberta Health Services (AHS) to develop PCN business plans, the program is demonstrating tremendous momentum.

The program has seen significant uptake by family physicians with approximately 60% of Alberta's family physicians currently involved in PCNs and serving almost two-thirds of Albertans. With the new PCI monies provided in the 2008-11 trilateral agreement, there is now funding available to create new PCNs.

Alberta Medical Association (AMA) encourages family physicians interested in developing a PCN to engage a Practice Management Program (PMP) consultant to work with their physician group. AMA's PMP assists physicians to organize as a group, designate physician leaders, discuss governance and legal options, and make informed decisions through all stages of developing a PCN.

It is important to resolve many of these issues before beginning to work with AHS representatives in developing a letter of intent. To arrange an appointment with a PMP consultant, contact PMP Project Coordinator Kristin M. Olafson at 403.205.2081, or email [kristin.olafson@albertadoctors.org](mailto:kristin.olafson@albertadoctors.org).

## **AMA nominee for president-elect**

Edmonton psychiatrist Dr. Patrick J. White is the Alberta Medical Association's nominee for 2009-10 president-elect. The Nominating Committee selected Dr. White at its March meeting; he has subsequently agreed to serve as the AMA nominee.

As an active AMA member, well versed in association activities and priorities, Dr. White has served in the following capacities:

Member, AMA Board of Directors (1998-2005)  
Representative Forum (RF) delegate (1996-2005)  
RF Deputy Speaker (2005-present)  
President, Section of General Psychiatry (2002-03)  
Past member - Nominating Committee and the board Executive Committee  
Chair, Physician Advocacy Group (2007-09)  
AMA representative to Canadian Medical Association General Council

In accordance with AMA policy, a call for further nominations for 2009-10 president-elect will be issued through *MD Scope* in May. If nominations are received, an election will be held in July; if no nominations are received, Dr. White will be acclaimed as president-elect.

### **Schedule of medical benefits changes (SOMB)**

The trilaterally agreed-to SOMB changes became effective April 1. As a service to members, AMA staff created the March 2009 *Billing Corner*, which includes the after-hours payment changes, changes that affect all physicians, and section-specific rules and health service code changes. The *Billing Corner* was emailed and mailed to all AMA members and is posted on the AMA website for reference: <http://www.albertadoctors.org/FeesBilling/April09SOMB>.

I encourage AMA members who have questions about the April 1 billing changes to attend a billing seminar hosted by Marilyn L. Kroon, AMA Consultant, Fees. Ms Kroon breaks down complex information to teach physicians how to appropriately claim for their services. She tells me that, "It is not enough for physicians to simply send their billing clerks to the seminars. Many physicians are unaware of the health service codes negotiated for them and thus are not claiming optimally for the health services they provide to patients." To attend or book a seminar, check the AMA website: [www.albertadoctors.org/BillingAdvice/Index](http://www.albertadoctors.org/BillingAdvice/Index).

The General Practice Liaison group (sections of general practice and rural medicine) created a fact sheet and template to inform family physicians about the new 03.04J health service code (comprehensive care plan for complex patients). These documents were emailed and mailed to family physicians and are available on the AMA website with additional resources. Look under the Fees and Negotiations tab, and click on Fees and Billing.

We trust that through the use of all of the available resources, physicians will be well informed about what these aspects of the 2008-11 trilateral agreement have to offer financially.

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As always, I look forward to your comments and feedback on issues that affect you in Alberta's current health care system.

Yours truly,

Noel W. Grisdale, MD, CCFP  
President