

The President's Letter

Dr. G.N. (Gerry) Kiefer



January 24, 2007

Dear Member:

My *President's Letter* last week emphasized the serious implications for Alberta from the current shortage of family physicians and specialists. Noting that some areas suffer more severely from such shortages, I released the *AMA Under-Serviced Areas Position Statement*.

Another important part of making Alberta an attractive province in which to practise is access to the appropriate tools for delivering care – tools such as office computerization that includes the electronic medial record (EMR).

Many physicians have contacted the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) about the value of the computerization, whose overhead costs are recognized through the Physician Office System Program (POSP). Addressing these ongoing costs is essential as the Provincial Government moves ahead with its e-health agenda, which also involves the regional health authorities (RHAs).

The Board of Directors has now approved the *AMA Electronic Medical Record Position Statement*. Key elements include:

- “All EMRs must meet provincial standards and requirements.”
- “Physicians should have a choice of EMRs that respects differences in physician requirements, preferences and patients’ needs.”
- “Physicians require ongoing and predictable funding for EMRs.”
- “RHAs that have an interest in offering RHA-sponsored EMRs to physicians must ensure:
 - “Their products and services meet the individual needs of physicians.
 - “Equal treatment for all EMR vendors.”
- “Stewardship of EMR information must continue to reside with the physician.”

The statement is attached; it is also available on the AMA website at <http://www.albertadoctors.org/Advocacy/GovernmentAffairs>.

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As the AMA promotes the importance of the electronic medical record, the position statement will guide our input and advocacy. A robust e-health system that provides timely, accurate patient information, when and where it is needed, is important to make Alberta a destination of choice for physicians. We must also ensure that it is designed and expanded in a way that puts Patients First®.

Yours truly,

G.N. (Gerry) Kiefer, MD, FRCSC
President

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