

## Joint Approach to Effective and Appropriate Advocacy

### ADVOCACY POLICY STATEMENT

Advocacy is an important component of the doctor-patient relationship and physicians should individually and collectively, advocate with their patients. Advocacy involves the responsible use of expertise and influence to advance patients health care interest.

There is a desire and need within Alberta to develop an environment wherein physicians are educated and appropriately engaged in the process of advocating for their patients.

In order to move this forward, the AMA, AHS and CPSA are spearheading a provincial tri-lateral initiative to address physician advocacy with specific roles and responsibilities.

#### **Principles**

**The following principles are interrelated and must be understood collectively**

1. AHS, AMA, CPSA and the faculties of medicine (U of A/U of C), acknowledge and support the “license” and “responsibility” of physicians to advocate for health including safe medical care on behalf of their patients, families and their communities without adverse repercussions.
2. Physicians, when advocating on behalf of patients, group of patients, community or society have an obligation to do so using proper process and to act in a professional manner.
3. In order for physicians to provide effective and appropriate advocacy, an environment must exist wherein physicians are supported and appropriately engaged in all decisions that affect their patients and work place.
4. A provincial approach will be developed with clearly communicated roles and accountabilities to support the physician advocacy role
5. Physicians have the right to expect a timely response to their advocacy efforts

#### **Description**

Physicians recognize their duty and ability to advance safer medical care, the overall health of their patients and the society they serve. Doctors identify advocacy activities as important for the individual patient, for populations of patients and for communities. Individual patients need physicians to assist them in navigating the healthcare system and accessing the appropriate health resources in a timely manner. Communities and societies need physicians’ special expertise to identify and collaboratively address broad health issues and the determinants of health. At this level, health advocacy involves efforts to change specific practices or policies on behalf of those served. Framed in this multi-level way, health advocacy is an essential and fundamental component of health promotion. Health advocacy is

appropriately expressed both by individual and collective actions of physicians in influencing public health and policy (CanMEDS 2005 Physician Competency Framework).

### **Goals of the Advocacy Program**

1. Identify and align the roles and the responsibilities of AHS, AMA and CPSA and ensure there are no accountability gaps.
2. Define the role of the Zone Medical Staff Association with respect to patient advocacy and their role of supporting physicians who are advocating for their patients
3. Develop a patient advocacy framework
4. Enhance the ability of physicians to be better and more effective advocates by:
  - a. Improving access to patient advocacy
  - b. Establish and support a group of ‘patient advocacy mentors’ who provide confidential advice to physicians throughout the advocacy process
  - c. Provide readily available contact information regarding where to go for advice when things go wrong or physicians perceive they are being intimidated
  - d. Work with educational institutions to enhance patient advocacy training through curriculum
  - e. Establish an accessible repository for patient advocacy information and resources
  - f. Embed the role of physician advocacy into training for physicians.