

(from February 2020 edition of AMA's Section News newsletter)

Section of Laboratory Physicians

Section Update

EY Review

The [Ernst and Young \(EY\) review of Alberta Health Services](#) highlighted the "sustained period of turmoil marked by interrupted and competing transformation agendas" that has plagued the laboratory services of Alberta over the past decade or so.

It is strangely satisfying to have an accounting firm acknowledge the upheaval that lab physicians have been living through. The report has carefully chosen to highlight some items, while ignoring others. For example:

- The report highlights the fact that the private lab has invested 84% more in its equipment than AHS-APL.
- The report says that 32% of DI equipment is past its recommended replacement timeline, but fails to mention that more than 70% of laboratory equipment is past its lifespan.

The narrative set forth by this report ends in one of the largest cost-savings recommendations (#30): further and complete privatization of the laboratory services in Alberta with a savings of \$102 million. Privatization would have wide-reaching implications for patients and doctors in the short-term and the long-term.

Turmoil in the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

On another note, I want to draw your attention to our forensic pathology colleagues at the [Office of the Chief Medical Examiner](#) (OCME).

As [recent news stories](#) have indicated, the OCME is under tremendous pressure. There have been chronic issues with low staffing and high workload volumes in this very important office. Unfortunately, the situation is about to get worse with the departure of two forensic pathologists, including the Chief Medical Examiner. This will leave the office in a critical situation.

A province the size of Alberta should have at least 12-16 forensic pathologists; soon there will be six. The forensic pathologists are doing three-to-four times the number of cases of other forensic pathologists in Canada. As employees of Alberta Justice, these colleagues are isolated. They need our support and advocacy to ensure their vital role in our health care system remains viable.

Dr. Brinda Balachandra

President Section of Laboratory Physicians - Alberta Medical Association

President of Alberta Society of Laboratory Physicians