

Family Medicine Review

February 3, 2023

Welcome to the most recent issue of the *Family Medicine Review*. Brought to you by the Sections of Family Medicine and Rural Medicine, the *Review* offers an at-a-glance summary of information, resources and events for Alberta's family physicians. New issues will be shared monthly.

Priority Notes

- ❖ *Government explores physician training in rural centres (see Recent Provincial Announcements)*
- ❖ *Alberta scaling back COVID variant surveillance (see COVID-19, Influenza and Other Outbreaks)*
- ❖ *CMA Health Summit Series: The Next Generation Workforce (see Upcoming Events)*

Recent Provincial Announcements

- The Government of Alberta has made several announcements in recent weeks, including [plans to spend \\$1 million to explore the feasibility of opening physician training centres at the University of Lethbridge and Northwestern Polytechnic in Grande Prairie](#).
- Preston Manning, the former Reform Party leader, has been appointed by Premier Danielle Smith to lead [a committee that will investigate how the Alberta government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).
- [The Bridge Healing Transitional Accommodation Program](#), a partnership between AHS and Jasper Place Wellness Centre, will open 36 new transition beds intended to improve health outcomes for people experiencing homelessness upon discharge from Edmonton hospital emergency departments (EDs).

Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System

- The Section of Family Medicine, Section of Rural Medicine and the PCN Physician Leads Executive delivered a written submission to MAPS in late December containing several recommendations. Representatives from SFM, SRM and PLE continue to offer guidance and input.
- The MAPS Innovation Forum was held on January 16-17 and invited primary care stakeholders to come together and discuss potential innovations for modernizing Alberta's primary health care system. The [January 24 President's Letter](#) outlined some of the key topics and the many things members have been advocating for through MAPS.
- [Health Minister Jason Copping did an interview with Steven Lewis](#), a health policy expert and one of the presenters at the MAPS Forum.

COVID-19, Influenza and Other Outbreaks

- After an early peak to the influenza season that saw a dramatic uptick in cases – the highest since 2009 – Alberta's influenza numbers have declined. In the face of a possible second wave, [experts are encouraging Albertans who haven't done so yet to get their flu shot](#).
- Although the spread of respiratory viruses has slowed, [Alberta hospitals remain busy](#).
- The [World Health Organization advised that COVID-19 remains a global health emergency](#), despite the fact that higher levels of immunity may soon be able to lower virus-related deaths.
- Alberta reported 21 new COVID-19 deaths over the past week, bringing the total since the start of the pandemic to 5,486.

- After nearly three years of the pandemic, [Alberta is scaling back COVID variant surveillance](#).
- Last week, Alberta Health Services declared an [outbreak of pertussis in parts of southern Alberta](#).

Physician Burnout

- Last week, [the Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association \(EZMSA\) issued a public letter](#) imploring Albertans to stop accepting inaction and demand change to fix our broken health care system.
- The mounting pressures physicians face are leading to a dramatic increase in fatigue and burnout. [Late last year, the College of Family Physicians of Canada released a position statement](#) that noted “Over 60 per cent of family physicians have indicated worsening mental health since the onset of the pandemic, attributed to increased workload, a lack of work-life balance, and other challenges.”
- A CMA article from last October profiled [rural physicians and how burnout is affecting them and their communities](#).
- A recent [Canadian Federation of Independent Business report](#) notes that Canadian doctors spend 18.5 million hours annually on unnecessary administrative work, which equates to approximately 55.6 million patient visits. The report details Nova Scotia’s approach to improving patient care by reducing red tape.

Physician Supply

- Several communities across the province continued to experience acute care and ED bed closures including, most recently, the communities of [Boyle](#) and [Grimshaw/Berwin](#).
- The CPSA has [launched a five-year pilot project that will condense the Practice Readiness Assessment \(PRA\) process for international medical graduates \(IMGs\)](#).
- In the face of a national health human resources crisis, a recent [CMA poll showed that 95 per cent of Canadian physicians and medical learners support pan-Canadian licensure](#).

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

RESIDE Program

The RESIDE program is a three-year (2021 to 2024) pilot project developed to help address family physician shortages in Alberta’s rural and remote communities. By April 2023, the RESIDE program will enter its last year of the three-year grant term but there is still time for new-in-practice physicians to apply.

The program has also recently expanded its eligibility. If you are a Family Medicine Physician who completed residency in Canada within the last five years or are currently a Resident Physician (R2 or R3) in Canada and reside in rural Alberta, you may be eligible for a retention grant worth up to \$120,000.

For more information, please visit rhpap.ca/RESIDE. Questions about RESIDE? Email RhPAP at reside@rhpap.ca.

CMA Event

[Health Summit Series: The Next Generation Workforce](#)

Wednesday, February 22, 7:00-8:30 p.m. ET

Designing a better future of care — a future the next generation of health professionals will want to be part of — starts with a clear vision of success. What do we want our health system to achieve? What do we need, now and in years to come, to support a thriving health workforce?

The third event in the CMA’s Health Summit Series: Bold Choices in Health Care will focus on the priorities of young physicians, nurses and other health workers — and what it will take to attract, train and retain them in a field in crisis.

The 68th Annual Family Medicine Summit

March 3-5, 2023

The ACFP and the Summit Scientific Planning Committee are pleased to announce the return of our preeminent event in person at the Rimrock Resort Hotel in Banff. The conference will offer both in-person and virtual experiences, streaming live and synchronously from the main stage of the conference for viewers at home.

For programming and registration details visit our event website: www.familymedicinesummit.ca

Spaces still available for AMA ACTT's PCN Governance Training – Essentials

Limited spaces are still available for March PCN Governance Training – Essentials interactive session dates. This curriculum is targeted to new members of the physician not-for-profit board, joint governance committee, PCN non-profit boards, PCN executive directors and any individuals who provide direct support to PCN boards/governance committees. It introduces the governance of PCNs in Alberta, the structure PCNs operate within and the many functions, roles and responsibilities that contribute to optimal boards and committees. Those interested in finding out more or enrolling can visit the [ACTT website](#).