

Family Medicine Review

January 25, 2022

Welcome to the first 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 every two weeks.

Priority Notes

- ❖ *AHCIP Bulletin, Virtual Care Billing Codes* (see Compensation)
- ❖ *Virtual Fee Code Webinar*, January 26, 12–1 pm (see Upcoming Events)
- ❖ *Bringing Clarity to Omicron Challenges Webinar*, January 26, 7–9 pm (see Upcoming Events)

Negotiations

- The [January 20, 2022, President's Letter](#) explained that discussions between the Alberta Medical Association and government are entering a new stage and will be taking a different approach than in the past, utilizing a facilitator and interest-based approach to negotiations.

Compensation

- The [December 30, 2021, President's Letter](#) announced that effective January 1, 2022, priority virtual care codes would increase. These changes included indirect patient care time and complex modifiers.
- The detailed AHCIP Bulletin was [published on January 12](#). SFM and SRM have been advocating for improved virtual care billing codes for some time, the latest being a letter in December 2021 requesting the Minister of Health address this urgent issue and its impact on practice survivability, and are pleased to see some progress.
- A webinar on the virtual code changes is being held Wednesday, January 26, 12–1 pm. See upcoming events for more details or click this link:
https://albertadoctors.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KvTaLiYRw6s5HsK09tAWg.

Informatics

- The SFM, SRM and PLE Executives received a Connect Care presentation from Alberta Health Services on December 7, 2021. This opportunity allowed family physician leadership to identify many of the challenges we are facing with Connect Care. We have since sent a letter reiterating some of these issues and have requested an opportunity to collaborate on potential solutions.

COVID-19

- AH, AHS, ACFP and the AMA offered two webinars focused on preparing community practices to deal with surging Omicron cases. Recordings of both the January 3 and January 11, 2022, webinars and accompanying resources are available [here](#).
- Earlier this month it was announced that [primary care physicians, pediatricians and their staff would have access to select personal protective equipment \(PPE\) at no-cost from January 4 until February 28, 2022](#), to enhance safety during the spread of the Omicron variant.
- We have been involved at multiple COVID-19 related tables to ensure primary care has a stronger voice in this fifth wave and beyond.

Advocacy

- SFM and SRM worked with the AMA's Speciality Care Alliance to [write a letter to Alberta Health requesting that the limited time, no-cost PPE offer be expanded include community specialists](#) so that all community physicians can be supported in running safe and sustainable practices for their patients during the current Omicron wave. Although the request was denied, we will continue working with our colleagues to advocate for their safety and the safety of all Albertans.

Physician Supply

- Many communities across the province continue to experience acute care and emergency department bed closures. Some of the communities most recently impacted include [Cold Lake](#), [Rocky Mountain House](#), [Wabasca-Desmarais](#), and [McLennan](#).

Governance

- Family physician leadership from SFM, SRM and PLE recently held a one-day virtual strategic retreat where they explored areas of collaboration and coordinated communication and advocacy priorities.

Upcoming Events

- **Webinar - Virtual Fee Code Update: Navigating the Updated Virtual Fee Codes**

January 26, 12–1 pm

Join AMA Health Economics and Virtual Care physician leaders as they review the latest changes in Virtual Care billing codes and practical applications of updated codes and modifiers.

If you are interested in joining the webinar you can register using the following link:

https://albertadoctors.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_KvTaLiYRw6s5Hsk09tAWg.

- **Webinar – University of Calgary's COVID Corner: Bringing Clarity to Omicron Challenges**

January 26, 7–9 pm

The webinar will discuss important topics such as guidelines for testing, isolation and return to work, the latest evidence for therapeutic options for outpatient management and guidance for Community Providers and navigate the protocols and availability of cited resources.

If you are interested in joining the webinar you can register using the following link:

<https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/cme/COVID-19-Resources/COVID-Corner>