



April 13, 2022

Dear Family Physicians,

Even before the pandemic arrived, being a family physician was challenging. This is especially true for those of us who live and work in smaller communities, where we often do double-duty providing essential care in local hospitals. Over the past two years, that job has grown exponentially harder as we faced pandemic-related issues and dealt with the departures of many of our colleagues. [A recent analysis by CBC News shows the impact of these growing physician supply challenges](#), noting that rural Alberta ERs and urgent care departments have already been without doctors more than 50 times this year so far. And we're not even halfway through April.

While the CBC analysis highlights the impact of physician supply challenges on emergency rooms and urgent care centres, we know you're also seeing the impact in your own practices. In certain areas of the province, Albertans are unable to find a family doctor close to home and are looking to communities hours away for primary care. I know fielding those requests from desperate patients is difficult and demoralizing, but there is only so much we can do to address the growing need. Many of us are overwhelmed, overworked, and increasingly burnt out. Being a family physician shouldn't be this hard.

Unfortunately, many new family doctors seem to be choosing to avoid Alberta. The first iteration of the 2022 R-1 main residency match by the Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS) [saw 32 unfilled Family Medicine residency spots at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary](#). The impact this will have on our province's future ability to provide essential primary care is deeply concerning.

Clearly, Alberta needs a strong recruitment and retention strategy that will give physicians a reason to choose Alberta. Your SFM Executive has been working with the AMA and the government to offer input on the challenges facing family physicians and influence the decisions that will shape recruitment and retention efforts. We also welcome your suggestions.

Hours of Work Study

Late last month, the AMA launched a physician Hours of Work Study, intended to measure the daily hours of work for various sections within the AMA. This study is an important component of the AMA Income Equity Initiative and may be used to inform negotiations, the AMA gender pay differences project, and other AMA physician workload analyses.

The AMA has contracted Malatest, an independent research firm, to conduct this study. Malatest has been emailing randomly selected Alberta physicians to invite them to participate by logging work activities using a web-based tool. If you have been contacted to participate, please consider being involved. We need to make sure that enough randomly selected family physicians share their information, so we have a sufficient

sample size. Malatest will continue recruiting physicians over the next two weeks and the final day for the study's registration is April 24. If you have any questions about the study, please visit: <https://www.albertadoctors.org/leaders-partners/income-equity/ama-hours-of-work-study>.

As always, if there is anything you would like to discuss, please reach out to me directly at sfmpres@albertadoctors.org.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Hodgson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Dr. Craig Hodgson
President, AMA Section of Family Medicine
