

Programs for specialists are on the way

We've consistently heard about the myriad of extremely beneficial programs for family doctors and their patients that the General Practice Services Committee (GPSC) has been successfully building. Formed in 2002, the GPSC took a few years to get off the ground, but now general practice is quickly becoming a solid cornerstone of BC's health care system that provides fair compensation for providing the difficult longitudinal care of complex medical patients.

I believe that specialists have looked carefully at the experience of the GPSC programs and considered what innovations could be advanced to improve access and quality in terms of specialty care. The Specialist Services Committee (SSC) was created in the 2006 Letter of Agreement and the 2007 Physician Master Agreement to facilitate collaboration between the provincial government, BCMA, and health authorities on the delivery of specialist physician services to British Columbians and to support the improvement of the specialist care system. Over the past 2 years, the SSC

has been building an effective relationship between the BCMA and the government. The fruit of this relationship can be seen in the consensus decisions on the allocation of \$30 million in disparity funding and \$4 million in medical consultant funding, and on identifying four nonsurgical priority areas. In addition to these tangible decisions, the government has a much better understanding of the challenges facing specialist physicians.

As we move forward, the 2009 Memorandum of Agreement further supports the SSC to develop positive initiatives by providing funding to enhance quality of specialty services, increasing access, supporting the provision of complex and chronic care, expanding clinical prevention activities, and making labor market adjustments where required for recruitment and retention of specialist physicians. The SSC is co-chaired by Dr Ken Seethram, an OB/GYN from Burnaby.

Because the BCMA and the provincial government are active participants in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's (IHI) Triple Aim initiative, the transformational change

being worked on through the SSC will be guided by the goals of that initiative, which are to:

- Improve the health of the population.
- Enhance the patient and provider experience of care (including quality, access, and reliability).
- Reduce, or at least control, the per capita cost of care.

Starting in April, the SSC will be implementing several initiatives that will include a combination of new fees, training modules, and activities to enhance the quality of, and improve appropriate patient access to, specialist physician services. As well, the SSC will be facilitating specialist participation and input into health system redesign initiatives led by the health authorities.

These are all amazing initiatives designed to help improve the specialist care system in BC and to enhance specialist physician compensation, satisfaction, and work-life quality. We are very much looking forward to fully implementing these initiatives to improve specialty care in BC over the next several years.

—**Brian Brodie, MD**
BCMA President

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