

Reflecting on last year; looking forward with optimism

The arrival of a new year provides a great opportunity to look back at the previous year's challenges and accomplishments, and to anticipate and work toward a promising and inspirational 2012.

As you most likely know, negotiations began in earnest last year to renew the Physician Master Agreement. At the time of writing this column in early January, an agreement has yet to be concluded. Our negotiators, however, are continuing to strive for an agreement. I will keep you apprised of any new developments as they occur.

Last June we released a policy paper, "Enhancing Surgical Care in BC: Improving Perioperative Quality, Efficiency, and Access," in which we reviewed issues common to most hospitals that negatively impact surgical care in the periods before, during, and after surgery. The BCMA recommended the development and implementation of standard procedures and best practices applying to all hospital operating rooms in the province.

In July, we released a second policy paper, entitled "Doctors Today and Tomorrow: Planning British Columbia's Physician Workforce," in which the BCMA looked at physician

resources in relation to the needs of patients. The paper made nine recommendations to ensure that our province has an adequate supply of physicians to meet the future health care needs of British Columbians.

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The BCMA considers it important to take a stand on health issues facing British Columbians, government, and physicians, and to make recommendations that we believe will benefit all partners in care. This year we will be releasing a policy paper on medical professionalism that will take a hard look at professional relationships and perceptions of medical professionalism, and make a series of recommendations based on our findings.

I am pleased to say that the BCMA and government worked well together last year in an effort to implement some key programs to enhance patient care. Based on the BCMA's 2009 policy paper on addiction, BC became the first jurisdiction in Canada to treat addiction as a chronic disease. Family doctors now have access to new guidelines covering screening, assessment, and intervention for problem drinking, and treatment resources for alcohol addiction similar to those available for other chronic diseases such as diabetes or hypertension.

As well, the Prescription for Health program became available last year. Developed in partnership with the General Practice Services Committee, this program provides doctors with additional tools to help British Columbians who smoke, have unhealthy eating habits, are physically inactive, or are medically obese to get on the road to a healthier lifestyle.

Through the Council on Health Promotion we had a successful second annual Walk with your Doc event last May in which more than 100 physicians in 28 communities took part. This year we intend to have an even bigger event, with the addition of a program called Be Active Every Day, developed to increase the activity levels of BC school children.

I am looking forward to 2012. Based on last year's successes and the hard work of BCMA staff and physician volunteers, I anticipate new programs being implemented to benefit physicians, patients, and the health care system, and the continuation of meaningful dialogue with government, including working toward a new Master Agreement.

—Nasir Jetha, MD
President

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