



## The pursuit of equity

**W**hen Doctors of BC was developing our most recent strategic plan, extensive conversations took place around how to address equity for our members and the best way to incorporate equity as a key principle. In this context, equity is our commitment to provide every member with the support needed to access the same participation opportunities in Doctors of BC without barriers and to embed an equity lens in all aspects of our work. As the organization develops strategies to live this commitment, it is important for us to remind ourselves why this journey is important for our members as human beings and for our profession as a truly human calling.

When it comes to equity in health care, research shows that women are more likely to report burnout and decreased job satisfaction, and minority physicians are more likely to face discrimination, have decreased job satisfaction, and have more conflicts with senior leadership. But when those of us who work in the health care system value equity, there are benefits for everyone. Valuing equity and positioning it as a foundational principle in our system lead to improved individual physician well-being, patient satisfaction, and clinical outcomes. Ample data show that more diverse health care systems provide more accurate diagnoses and create better therapeutic alliances with patients, enhancing patient compliance and happiness with care plans.

How do we then implement and embody this foundational principle of equity in our health care system? We begin at the individual level by fostering respectful

dialogue and communication between physicians in all scenarios—in person, email, telephone, messages, and so on. Those of us who work in team or departmental settings should be part of conversations about why equity is important, and not just for

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those who have historically been marginalized. If we want our health care system to deliver high-quality results, we must take ownership of creating relationships and structures that embody the highest quality of human interaction, regardless of our intersectionality.

Beyond including equity as one of the pillars of our strategic plan, Doctors of BC has undertaken substantial work on the gender pay gap. We are the first provincial or territorial medical association to recognize the gender pay gap within our provincial Physician Master Agreement, we have a structure in place to provide individual Sections with data on their Section's gender pay gap, and we have committed funds to help reduce the gender pay gap. The General

Surgeons of BC has already used these data to reduce its gender pay gap by a significant amount, although there is still room to do more.

While many health care systems, including BC's, are committed to equity, much work remains to be done. Many physicians continue to pinpoint a lack of equity as a prime cause of feeling disrespected at work and distrust the health care system's ability to protect them when they are victims of disrespect. Yet, because doctors love their work and their colleagues, they speak up when they are wounded. And it is this good faith criticism that reflects their belief that health care can be better for them and for the patients they look after. By employing the ideas and emotions that this good faith criticism raises, together we can create change and ensure accountability. But we can do this only by reminding ourselves and our colleagues that we are never alone, and that regardless of our differences, we can only be better together. ■

—Ahmer A. Karimuddin, MD, FRCS  
Doctors of BC President