



Increasing the influence of the physician voice

Our health care system is facing significant challenges. Emergency room closures, a physician shortage, longer-than-ever wait times for specialist care, and significant delays in cancer care are just a few of the issues patients and physicians experience daily. We need to reimagine the future of our health care system to ensure patients receive the highest quality of care possible, physicians work in the most optimal environments, and the overall health of our population—the primary goal of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement's triple aim—is on an upward trajectory. To do this, we need to increase the influence of the physician voice.

There is ample evidence showing that the influence of the physician voice is critical to achieve the triple aim and its goal of providing care of the highest value. This is one of many reasons why, when Doctors of BC was developing the 2024–2029 strategic plan, we held extensive consultations with physicians across the province, from all specialties and backgrounds, practising in both small towns and large cities, to ensure the physician voice was captured and amplified. It is also why increasing the influence of the physician voice was identified as the most important strategic priority for the association. Through this priority, Doctors of BC will work to ensure doctors throughout the province can bring their perspectives forward with important health care partners and ensure meaningful physician participation and influence whenever health care decisions are being made.

The impact of this influence is already being seen in areas such as the work of

medical staff associations and divisions of family practice, and through programs such as the Family Practice Services Committee's Leadership and Management Development Program at Simon Fraser University and the Specialist Services Committee's Physician Leadership Program at the University of

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British Columbia's Sauder School of Business. Both focus on increasing physician capacity for leadership and understanding the levers necessary for change. In the upcoming Physician Master Agreement negotiations, a key priority will be ensuring physicians are part of key decisions happening across the health care system.

While this work is important at the system level, physician influence matters most where the rubber meets the road—for the individual patient and the individual ward or clinical practice. How can you increase your influence here and bring about meaningful change? What can you do daily to help change how you are perceived in the health care system? Inspired by Adam Grant's wonderful book *Think Again*, here are a few suggestions.

Accept that things can always be better. There is no perfect system or idea. Things have to change, and in that evolution, we have to be willing to change our minds.

Accept that no individual, not even you,

has all the answers. Conversely, no one, not even those in medical leadership, is completely wrong. Be willing to recognize the limits of your perspective and knowledge, and actively seek others' perspectives.

Ask questions to understand why people make the decisions they do rather than focusing on convincing them of your perspective. This is best done one on one, over coffee or on a walk together. This can build trust and help find common ground.

If you want to propose a change, consider offering it as an experiment, and be willing to adjust based on real-world results. This will help you find traction for your ideas, because an experiment is less risky than a permanent change.

Ensure that everyone around you, including those you disagree with, feels psychologically safe in their interactions with you. When people don't feel psychologically safe, they shut down and are unable to see things from different perspectives.

And perhaps the most important suggestion is to remember that no single person has all the answers. Working with others and seeking their perspectives will make any idea better and help find solutions that one individual could not have considered.

Doctors of BC will continue our work to increase the influence of every physician's voice to transform the health care system, but that work isn't possible without your individual leadership. Together, if 17 000 of us commit to making a positive change for our patients and colleagues, how can we not succeed? ■

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