

Alberta Doctors' Digest

A message from your new president

My year as president-elect flew by, and on September 22, I assumed the position of president of the Alberta Medical Association. I wanted to share just a few thoughts as I begin my term.

At the AMA offices, they have two walls of photographs of previous AMA presidents stretching back 113 years. It is something to see. It represents the history of medicine in Alberta. I think of how much things have changed since those early days. I think of how physicians have been the leaders in that change. I think of how the Alberta Medical Association has been that body that endeavors to listen to all physician voices and to unify us in change.

Anyone who spends time at our Representative Forum will be impressed by the collegiality, expertise and professional insight of this body. This September 21-22 meeting was no exception. The Board is fortunate to be guided by such an outstanding group of physician leaders.



Dr. Alison M. Clarke: The AMA should be the place where our accomplishments can be recognized and applauded (photo credit: Curtis Comeau).

While we recognize these leaders, though, there are thousands of members out there who have never served in a formal leadership role. They go to work every day, practice medicine, care for patients and do what is required to ensure their patients get the care they need. They would not necessarily think of themselves as leaders, or health care advocates, or patient champions. But they are. The AMA vision of a high-performing health care system requires their efforts too.

It is time we recognize the importance of these contributions. This year, I would like to turn the spotlight on those physicians. It is time to shine a light on every physician who is making a change: on the rural physician spearheading work to improve community palliative care; on the specialist going out of her way to ensure the patient she sees is handed safely back to the family physician and integrated into the medical home; on the clinic physician reorganizing his office to provide evening hours and urgent appointments. There are so many more examples I could list.

This year, I'd like to give the people of Alberta a chance to know about all the amazing things that are happening in health care here — and how a lot of it is done by physicians who are “just doing their job.” I'd like more physicians to recognize their own leadership and for the AMA to offer them chances to grow as leaders.

So, here's my invitation, starting today. If you have a story about good things happening in your practice, let me know. If you know a colleague who is doing something innovative, let me know. The AMA should be the place where our accomplishments can be recognized and applauded. I look forward to the stories we will hear and the leadership we can develop.

I will write to you again soon about some of the issues that were successfully discussed and debated at the Representative Forum. There are exciting opportunities emerging to allow us to close some of the gaps between primary and secondary care and to build a more integrated health care system for our patients. There are new trends in informatics, communication and data that will inform us and challenge us. There will be, undoubtedly, continuing severe fiscal challenges in our province, and physicians will continue to do our part as stewards and leaders.

As I begin my term in office, I thank the membership for allowing me the privilege of serving you. I look forward to getting to know you better in the year ahead.

- Dr. Alison M. Clarke

Banner photo credit: Curtis Comeau