

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Healthy working environments

Like me, perhaps you have lately observed a surge of headlines, reports and journal articles like these:

- Why focusing on professional burnout is not enough
- Task force launched to tackle sexual harassment
- Addressing gender equity and diversity in Canada's medical profession
- Understanding how patients perceive physician wellness and its links to patient care
- Most doctors have little or no management training, and that's a problem

Almost a year ago, the AMA board sat down at our annual business planning retreat and considered the convergence of these issues in our profession and in society at large. Respect. Diversity. Inclusion. Leadership. Wellness. All of these are relevant to AMA members and absolutely necessary if we are to play a leadership role in the health care system.

This discussion manifested in a new [business plan](#) goal: committing the AMA to “working with and for physicians to address system issues which impede attaining a safe, healthy and equitable working environment.”

Engagement and consultation

As we tackle healthy working environments (HWE), the board has taken a comprehensive approach to addressing multiple environment factors and their relationships. There has been engagement with physicians to identify ways to create a more diverse and inclusive AMA, to create awareness of the importance of HWE, and to identify possible strategies for HWE through member engagement and collaboration with our partners in the health care system.

We have approached our system partners, who welcomed the opportunity to be involved in a collaborative and system-wide approach. We kicked off these efforts via a leaders' meeting, joined by colleagues from Alberta Health Services, Canadian Medical Association, College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, Health Quality Council of Alberta, Canadian Medical Protective Association, Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta, and University of Alberta and Calgary Faculties of Medicine Medical Students' Associations.

Through this session, we reached something I think is extremely powerful: a joint acknowledgement that we have an interest in co-creating safe, healthy, equitable and inclusive cultures where all health care team members are respected, valued and

supported fairly to achieve their full potential, while improving patient outcomes/ satisfaction and supporting system sustainability.

The board believes that success will require being flexible and fluid in planning, building on relationships, and keeping work aligned across the system. To this end, we have done two things:

- We have committed to a cycle of external leader meetings through an alliance of organizations, identified as the PROactive Alliance.
- We will establish an HWE Advisory Committee to provide informed advice and guidance to the board in developing inclusive policies and innovative practices.

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HWE framework

The first product of the consultation and engagement was the AMA's Healthy Working Environments Framework. Here is an [infographic](#) we have developed to highlight the three components of the framework and describe the events that contributed to its development:

1. Diversity and inclusion: April was Celebrate Diversity Month in Canada, illustrating the increasing importance of this topic in organizations and society. A healthy workplace should provide an open, accessible and accepting environment that strives for equity and embraces, respects and values our differences. Inclusive cultures further strengthen our profession, while enhancing clinical outcomes.
2. Leadership: Leadership enables HWE through modelling, advocacy and support. Leadership is also accountable for promoting equitable and respectful work environments and responding to issues and challenges in order to sustain HWE.
3. Psycho-social wellness and safety: These elements strongly relate to a just culture with its system of shared accountability within an open learning environment. The announcement of the AMA/CMA [Well Doc](#) collaboration under our new Memorandum of Understanding is an early and important step under this component of the HWE framework.

As you think about these topics, I invite you to consider the many ways that they link to what the board is pursuing under our vision. There will be ongoing financial pressures facing health care with a corresponding need to balance questions of value and affordability while striving for a fully integrated system. The AMA's vision and mission to these ends are enabled through the wellness and safety of members thriving as leaders in healthy, diverse and inclusive working environments.

I hope you will take a look at the framework and let me know if you have comments or suggestions for future directions. I will keep you up to date on what happens as we move forward.

You can keep track of HWE initiatives and progress, including information on the [Healthy Working Environments Advisory Committee, on the AMA website.](#)

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