

# Alberta Doctors' Digest

## Better together: The work of keeping a complex profession unified

Tracking surveys are an important way for the Alberta Medical Association to hear members and to assess the predominance of member opinions. The AMA conducted its last member tracking survey in October 2017 with a random sample of 3,000 members. Responses were received from 447 members for a response rate of 15%. The data is valid 19 times out of 20 within a margin of error of +/- 4.56%. A 2018 tracking survey will be reported on soon.

In general, some members are feeling better about the progress of the AMA. Many members feel past decisions have been unfair, and others are having a hard time feeling considered at all. It will be important for the AMA to stay open to criticism, learn from it and continue the dialogue with members toward greater understanding because constant adjustments and communication will be needed to achieve what is heard from members. The vision is for members to be heard and for the actions they need to be reflected in the system through a united voice of openness and accountability.

In response to all benchmark questions, the October 2017 survey indicated overall agreement had not changed since the April 2017 survey. However, the gap in agreement between family medicine and specialist had increased. Those in family medicine were more likely to agree that they could see and feel progress. Conversely, specialists were less likely to feel that progress was being made.

While the goal is to see progress equally across the membership, it is normal, as specific topics and issues are addressed, to identify a focus of one group of members which other members do not share. That was the case in the last year as specialists trended down in their levels of agreement.

# Tracking Survey October 2017

## Summary of Findings



Member comments reflect a complex health care system

Specialists are a diverse group. Supporting and communicating with them is a challenge. What makes specialists similar is that they are all different. Speaking on behalf of specialists requires a keen understanding of their needs and an effective communication system among them. When tangible examples are drawn or shared, those distinctions are highlighted for specialists. This is not a new challenge.

The member tracking surveys for the past 20 years have continued to identify distinctions not only between specialists and family physicians, but among specialists themselves. Given the contextual differences among specialists, it is a normal gap. Over time the AMA has managed this gap by benchmarking, tracking and taking action to reduce it. Showing a 15% gap in agreement with the benchmark questions, specialists will need additional attention to have their issues highlighted.

For family medicine, the positive trends were driven by more agreement with the progress of the Physician Compensation Committee and increased support for the evolution towards a medical home model. Family physicians were also more likely to agree that they are well informed about the initiatives of the AMA and changes within the health care system.

### **Quotes from family physician/general practitioner and specialist: family medicine**

"I see ANDI as a good starting point."

"The AMA is taking important steps in fee equity. I applaud their courage and commitment."

"The AMA is helping facilitate uncertainty."

### **Quotes from specialist: Other**

"Physician Compensation Committee is over-represented by family physicians."

"I am concerned about the lack of transparency with respect to the ANDI process."

### **Final thoughts**

Reviewing member comments, one can see they reflect a complex health care system, a changing environment placing greater demands on members and a communication environment that competes for attention. Maintaining strong member connection will require constant outreach, monitoring and consistency to reach and effectively advocate for all.

Surveys are one way for members to share their feedback. Asking the same questions over time allows the AMA to benchmark and track that feedback. The AMA can see the gains and losses. Through the AMA, members continue to pursue a better health care system in which to practice medicine and improve the quality of work life. There is member feedback systems other than surveys, such as member forums, contact with one's Representative Forum designate or replying to the *President's Letter*.

Feedback is a gift. While change can be frustrating, member feedback allows the association to adjust, get better and achieve results for members and patients.

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