

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Diagnosis care deficit

A new phase of AMA advocacy began in March to help Albertans better understand what is happening in health care. We also hope to identify ideas – with partners and stakeholders – for resolution, innovation and solutions.

The AMA launched the Care Deficit Assessment Series (CDAS) on patient care issues across the profession. The series of issue papers assesses the great breadth and depth of the care deficit's impact and the backlog that will take years to resolve – achievable only with the efforts of all parties working together. Topics for this series are being developed based on member engagement and research, and with the guidance of the Joint Physician Advocacy Committee.

The [growing list of CDAS issues](#) has addressed pediatric mental health, women's health, care of the elderly, emergency departments, and dermatology. Each CDAS issue has three documents:

- Executive summary;
- Detailed document linked from the executive summary;
- Physician talking points for your use should you be questioned by patients or encounter conversations on these subjects.

Every issue paper will contain:

- Description of the care deficit as physicians are seeing it in a particular group of patients.
- Description of the impact on patients through the pandemic.
- Issues and themes that have emerged in that experience.
- How physicians have managed and mitigated against negative impacts during COVID-19.
- What these physicians see as long-term solutions.
- Physician-recommended patient/family/caregiver resources to help patients now.

Following on these issue papers that present the insights and hopes of physicians delivering care, we are bringing patient voices to the conversation. We have conducted research to accompany the care deficit series in our [albertapatient.ca](#) online research community of over 15,000 Albertans. The first survey, which addressed pediatric mental health, produced [startling results](#) and received widespread media attention. At the time of writing, we were just closing a second study on the patient experience and expectations of our over-burdened emergency departments. Results are expected to be released in July. We will continue to use [albertapatient.ca](#) in the year ahead to engage frequently with patients about how their care is affected and what this suggests for AMA advocacy.

In another effort to measure the care deficit, we have launched a survey at the website PatientsFirst.ca. We encourage physicians to refer patients to the website to take a simple, two-minute survey. We want to hear from anyone who can't find a family physician or is waiting for visits, tests, treatment or surgery. We will report what we learn on a regular basis to the public and to our system partners.

The care deficit is here. It is broad and deep. It will take the efforts of all parties and considerable time to reverse. We will advocate for solutions we see to problems affecting our patients.