

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Joint Physician Advocacy Committee summer update

The AMA's Joint Physician Advocacy Committee (JPAC) has continued its work over the summer months to draw attention to the issues that are impacting our health care system, our patients and our profession.

Care Deficit Assessment Series

As part of our ongoing Care Deficit Assessment Series (CDAS), we developed issue papers on health, the drug poisoning crisis, breast cancer reconstruction surgery and the ongoing challenges facing the Airdrie Urgent Care Centre. Each paper focuses on the impact that the care deficit has had on patients and our health system while offering suggestions for how we can work together to address the many challenges. More issue papers are under development, and you can find the most recent [here](#). As always, we welcome suggestions from members on other topics to explore.

PatientsFirst data on emergency departments

The crisis in Alberta's emergency departments continues to escalate. Data gathered through our PatientsFirst.ca platform on emergency department visits was shared with members and the public through a *President's Letter* and several earned media stories including [this one](#). Approximately 4,400 Albertans responded to our survey, detailing their experiences with waiting for care and reiterating the importance of supporting community primary care. Most respondents indicated they would have chosen other options rather than visiting the emergency department if it had been possible.

Earned media

AMA President Dr. Michelle Warren continued to speak with media on important issues including the following:

- <https://www.atinitonews.com/2022/08/why-financial-incentives-arent-enough-to-deal-with-health-care-staffing-shortages/>
- <https://www.dailyheraldtribune.com/news/local-news/new-healthcare-agreement-being-discussed-with-ucp>
- <https://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/news/local-news/alberta-in-need-of-mental-health-training-for-essential-workers>
- <https://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/news/local-news/one-in-five-albertans-awaiting-health-care-have-faced-year-plus-delays-survey>
- <http://sunmedia.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/showarticle.aspx?&article=35bcdbc5-6002-416a-b3b6-789d3158335c&viewmode=2&page=6>

In addition, Dr. Warren was [interviewed on CHED 770](#) radio on issues such as incentives for rural care:

Op-Eds and letters to the editor

Dr. Warren also penned several op-eds and letters to the editor:

- [Let's break down silos to streamline Alberta's health care](#)
- Keep primary medical care out of AHS purview [Re. "No easy answers to doctor shortage." Letters, Aug. 13](#) (Note: scroll half way down the page)

Summer issues of the President's Letter

Between June 15 and August 31, Dr. Warren wrote numerous issues of the *President's Letter* to keep members and the public informed about the issues that are impacting our health system, update members on the status of important programs such as clinical stipends and offer updates on the discussion with government as we work toward a negotiated agreement.

- August 19 - [PatientsFirst.ca data; thoughts on scopes of practice](#)
- August 12 - [Health care questions for leadership candidates](#)
- July 29 - [Alberta's new leader needs a plan for health care](#)
- July 22 - [What patients say about emergency departments and what it means](#)
- July 18 - [Provincial leadership race is here](#)
- July 15 - [Update on negotiations; the care deficit hangs on](#)
- June 24 - [Roe v. Wade decision an attack on women's right to health](#)
- June 21 - [No changes to stipend programs on June 30](#)
- June 17 - [Further progress toward income equity](#)
- June 14 - [Care deficit and dermatology](#)

UCP leadership race

In the midst of the leadership race for the United Conservative Party, we worked to ensure that health care issues were front and centre with candidates. Our August 12 *President's Letter* invited members to share the questions they would like posed to candidates: <https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/media-publications/presidents-letter/pl-archive/physician-patient-questions-for-leadership-candidates>.

We also invited members of our PatientsFirst.ca community to submit their questions for consideration. Dr. Warren used some of these questions during a series of August and September meetings with leadership candidates. Those candidates who couldn't meet in person were asked to [answer the questions](#) via email.

Social media

We continued to use social media to share information on important care deficit issues such as the opioid crisis, local physician resources, emergency department closures, the Edmonton Zone hallway medicine protocol, a lack of obstetric services in select communities, the national health human resource shortage and the importance of vaccinations and COVID booster availability.

We also amplified important messaging from health partners like the Canadian Medical Association on issues that matter and on significant milestones including the installation

of the CMA's first Indigenous president, Dr. Alika Lafontaine, an anesthesiologist from Grande Prairie.

In addition, social media was used to recruit Albertans to be part of our PatientsFirst.ca community so that they could share their care deficit experiences.

Looking ahead

As we move into the fall, JPAC will continue to focus on the advocacy issues that we know are most important to members, including physician supply challenges, the emergency department crisis and the expansion of pharmacy-led clinics and their impact on the patient's medical home.

Our CDAS series will explore more care deficit impacts, and we will look for ways to engage with the successful UCP leadership candidate to ensure patients and patient care are prioritized. We look forward to keeping readers apprised of our efforts and our progress.