

To All Ontario Family Physicians,

April 30, 2009

Putting Patients First with Leadership and Innovation

COFP Calls On OMA, Government To Open The Door To Real Innovation

New economic conditions in Ontario require urgent innovation in healthcare. The Coalition of Family Physicians of Ontario believes that real change – not just a re-shuffling of provider roles – can be driven by primary care physicians on the front lines who understand the challenges of day-to-day practice along with the needs of their patients.

While we recognize that solutions to primary healthcare delivery issues in Ontario are likely to manifest themselves in many forms and that there is no single “one size fits all” solution, we believe that each solution must overcome the barriers to innovation, which include physician complacency, dependency on government by both patients and physicians, and a lack of patient-driven care. All three of these obstacles must be dealt with if we are to move forward with real innovation.

Some physician organizations have looked to Patient Enrolled Models (PEMs) and Family Health Teams (FHTs) as the solution for improved primary care access and funding. But there are questions surrounding such entities. Physician registration in some models was temporarily put on hold this April by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), while indecision surrounding FHT roll-out in the last Ontario budget is now also a cause for concern. This is not a time for physician complacency – the future of family medicine is at stake and we need your help.

The uncertain times ahead and the pace of change in technology and medical science in general – change that is too rapid for bureaucratic mechanisms to accommodate in a timely way – require increased flexibility in the way primary care is delivered by physicians and their staff.

Unfortunately, the *OMA Dues Act* and Bill 8, the *Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act*, create dependency and inflexibility here in Ontario that do not foster innovation. Instead, they create an environment in which solutions are expected of bureaucracies and not individuals. The entrepreneurship that could lead to new efficient and convenient approaches for patients is stifled, and in some instances, completely blocked.

Services that patients are willing to fund through uninsured services programs – including the use of improved communication technologies – are one way for family physicians to improve access for patients and to engage them in their own care, whether it is for chronic disease monitoring or simply for an opinion from a trusted and well-trained family physician. We must not wait for government to fund such technologies, but instead find ways to provide the services that patients want and are able to pay for – including electronic access and innovative programs such as Hello Health (hellohealth.com) and Myca (myca.com).

True patient-driven care will allow for the diverse needs and circumstances of patients, while permitting physicians the freedom to innovate and provide convenient and efficient care. Patients paying a small monthly fee can be empowered in their own care, and engaged in the process of prevention and wellness while they monitor their own health parameters with the input and support from their physician and/or team.

While government rations Family Health Teams and temporarily restricts physician registration in government-created models because of cost concerns, there are other ways to make access to physicians convenient, efficient and effective for the patient that will increase the quality AND equality of care.

COALITION OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Tough times call for true leadership. This is why the Coalition of Family Physicians of Ontario is asking you to join with us to call upon the Ontario Medical Association and the Government of Ontario to open the door to real innovation in healthcare that improves freedom for patients and enhances patient care.



Douglas Mark MD, President
and the Board of the Coalition of Family Physicians of Ontario

P.S. Thank you to all of those family physicians who have once again chosen to support our cause financially. For those of you still sitting on the fence, we invite you to become a part of a truly exciting and innovative grassroots medical movement.

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2009 COFP MEMBERSHIP FORM

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