

September 24, 2009

## **"Physicians and Health Emergencies" CPSO Draft Policy**

Ontario physicians provide exemplary care to their patients. Professional self-regulation is a privilege that we appreciate and respect. However, our relationship with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) has been under strain to the point of being at times adversarial particularly during the time of the Medical Review Committee (MRC) audit process. In contrast, other provinces and territories seem to have cooperative or even collegial relationships between physicians and their respective regulatory colleges. We hope that the CPSO is actively engaged in improving this state of affairs.

In recent weeks, the CPSO released its draft new policy called **"Physicians and Health Emergencies"** for Ontario physician feedback. Similar guiding principles have been adopted across Canada for physicians and other health professions in the wake of SARS. Today, as pH1N1 is poised to sweep through Ontario, the CPSO Council is meeting to determine the final outcome of this draft policy. Our response letter appears below.

September 18, 2009

Ms. Maureen Boon  
Associate Director, Policy  
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario  
80 College St  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E2

Dear Ms. Boon,

### **RE: Physicians and Health Emergencies draft policy**

Thank-you for requesting our opinion on your new draft policy, **Physicians and Health Emergencies**. Our Board has carefully read over the draft and background information and has come to the following consensus.

1. We support the reaffirmation that Ontario's dedicated physicians provide exemplary care to patients often putting their lives at peril particularly at times of crisis.
2. We also acknowledge that government and healthcare institutions are responsible to do their utmost to support physicians and other healthcare workers particularly at times of crisis.
3. We agree that under a temporary health emergency, physicians should be allowed to provide care outside their areas of expertise as you have detailed.
4. We are concerned that that this proposal is in the form of an official CPSO **policy**, which is enforceable by law under the legislation that govern our profession. This may cause physicians to feel compelled to provide care beyond their level of comfort and risk. Physicians must be free to choose their own level of risk, including the risk of death, based upon their professional skills weighed against their responsibilities and commitments in their personal lives. We recommend that this proposal would be better categorized as a **position statement**.
5. Lastly, rather than recommending individual physicians to contact The Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) to determine whether or not their malpractice insurance coverage would be extended beyond their usual scope of practice in health emergencies, we recommend that the CPSO itself should carry out this undertaking or ensure that another physician representative body such as the Ontario Medical

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Association (OMA) or Canadian Medical Association (CMA) does. Physicians must not be held back by the concern that they may not be insured under this scenario.

On behalf of the Board of the Coalition of Family Physicians of Ontario, I hope that our feedback and recommendations will assist you in this undertaking.

Sincerely, Douglas Mark MD, President

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### Isn't it Time for You to Join the COFP?

Many family physicians have joined the Coalition of Family Physicians of Ontario. We truly appreciate their dedication and support and hope that those who haven't yet joined or renewed their memberships do so today. In addition, a number of specialist physicians have expressed their support of the leadership we have provided to the profession. Because several issues we face and initiatives span across the entire physician profession, we have decided to open our organization to **accept specialist physicians** to increase our diversity and explore new issues and initiatives that this brings. More details will follow in the coming weeks.

The provision of healthcare in Ontario faces a number of crises. All Ontario physicians and the patients we serve deserve better. Please show your support and tell us you want this to change by joining or renewing with the COFP today.

Sincerely,

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

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### 2009 COFP MEMBERSHIP FORM

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I am a family physician  I am a specialist in \_\_\_\_\_

I am submitting my 2009 Membership Dues:  \$200/yr  \$75/yr retired (Residents/Students free)

I am making a further Political Action Contribution:  \$50  \$100  \$250  \$500  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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#### THE COALITION OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS OF ONTARIO

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