



PRESIDENT'S BULLETIN

June 29, 2010

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you have heard about Minister Falcon's announcement delivered in White Rock on Thursday June 24th. He promised a GP for every citizen of BC by 2015. As SGP President, I am feeling guardedly optimistic about the Ministry's philosophical commitments towards the Nirvana of stronger Primary Care.

The last few years have been exciting & progressive times for the transformation of General practice in BC. There is no doubt that morale in family practice has made a significant positive turn. However as many of you pointed out, the current initiatives have provided more recognition & financial reward, sometimes at the expense of more work. Our work makes a difference for patients and health systems. The evidence is clear, that having a regular family doctor who coordinates patient care makes for safer, more effective and more efficient care. Valuing attachment to a regular provider has the potential to make the existing physician supply go farther; increasing capacity by reducing demand. But to make this sustainable, more support, less paperwork, and more streamlined workflow with regional community resources will be required.

There are currently not enough GP's to deliver services in our traditional way. Divisions are looking at providing new services, & delivering old services in new ways. However at one of our division meetings I gave a talk entitled "bring on the clones". Building stronger system supports for family practice is critical to continuing to hold things together until the new increased numbers of medical school grads arrive. And we need those grads choosing to do family practice, which means ensuring current family docs are feeling happy and supported in their work to provide positive role models.

The Ministry appears to see that transformational change is required. The SGP is involved in these discussions at GPSC, and our SGP reps Jean Clarke and George Watson are doing yeoman service on your behalves. Rest assured we are working hard to ensure that GP's do not become sidelined as groups jostle for position. We strive to ensure the centrality of the GP patient relationship & that we remain our patients "personal medical advisors".

I would add that many of us are close to retirement, or have reached the time to slow down (or attempt to slow down). I would like to see initiatives that encourage us to stay in practice. (And I don't mean a crashing stock market!). It seems critical to find better ways to utilize our wisdom & experience, without paying the price of lost personal & family time. Our response to the minister's announcement can be summarized in the following paragraphs:

"We are pleased with the Minister of Health's recognition that the long-term relationship between a patient and a regular Family Doctor is key to the sustainability of healthcare in BC. Results of the evaluation of the GP Services Committee (GPSC) initiatives demonstrate that having a patient attached to a regular family doctor over time, reduces costs to the system. As a result, the GPSC, at which the SGP is a participant, is trialing an initiative that is intended to further support the attachment of patients to a regular doctor. These trials will begin in 3 areas of BC which have currently formed Divisions of family practice.

The family doctors in these Divisions have volunteered to look at how they can increase their capacity to care for more patients with the addition of other supports such as allied health professionals (nurses, NPs, social workers, etc) and the use of alternative practice styles, including group visits, and advanced access. If the prototyping is successful, then the goal is to roll this out over the next few years across the rest of the province as more family doctors form Divisions and other groups that will be able to implement these practice changes. Participation in the attachment initiative is and will remain voluntary.

Part of the solution is also encouraging new medical graduates to take up family practice in a model that supports long-term continuity of care, while ensuring that physicians are well supported by regional services and allied health professionals in bearing the extra load of making a commitment to patients over time. Improved access to coordinated community services could help to reduce current excess family practice office workloads, while improving patient care. If the initiative is successful, then the hope is that all British Columbians who want a Family Physician will have access to one by 2015, and can then benefit from that relationship."

SGP wants to hear your thoughts and concerns about this initiative, and we welcome your ideas for positive change. Send your comments to sgp.feedback@bcma.bc.ca .

Dr Ralph Jones
President, SGP

SOCIETY OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS OF B.C.

115 – 1665 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6J 5A4
Tel 604-938-2943 Fax 604-736-6160 Website: www.sgp.bc.ca