



Meeting today's challenges; preparing for tomorrow's

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During Family Medicine Forum (FMF) 2009, held recently in Calgary, Alta, more than 2400 family physicians participated in an extensive menu of continuing medical education or continuing professional development focused on the clinical, teaching, research, and health system challenges we are facing in Canada.

The opening ceremonies featured a keynote address by Dr Barbara Starfield, Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md, and the world's most renowned researcher on primary care and population health outcomes. Dr Starfield presented the evidence supporting the value of every person having a personal physician and access to a team of primary care health professionals. Her research also demonstrated that a patient who sees the same physician as often as possible over time has the best outcomes. Dr Starfield's presentation is available at www.cfpc.ca.


A national media conference featured the release of our discussion paper "Patient-Centred Primary Care in Canada: Bring It On Home,"¹ which recommends that all Canadians should have access to family practice settings that serve as their one-stop centres or medical homes, providing them with timely primary care and coordination of other needed medical services. The key to the success of these centres is that each person has a personal family doctor who works with other health professionals in a practice that includes electronic medical records. The College is asking governments to maintain and increase their earlier commitments to primary care, reminding them of Starfield's evidence of the value of the family doctor and comprehensive continuing care.

Pandemic H1N1 was a major topic throughout our Annual Scientific Assembly. Our College Board meeting included a special session to share perspectives from across the country on what has and has not gone well with the planning and delivery of services related to this pandemic. From this and other feedback, the College will be developing an H1N1 Report Card to present to public health and government leaders. Feedback from both family physicians and their patients has reinforced the fact that the failure to include the network of almost 30000 family physicians across Canada as an essential part of our nation's pandemic plan was a serious oversight. Although public health officials have dealt with immense challenges, they did not seize the opportunity for a much more cohesive and better coordinated approach to both the immunization and patient care elements of the H1N1 pandemic.

We hope our system will recognize and support family practices and family doctors as core parts of future public health planning to help avoid the chaos and anxiety that millions of Canadians have recently experienced.

The College Board approved the first slate of programs for our new Section of Family Physicians with Special Interests or Focused Practices: palliative care, mental health, maternity and newborn care, emergency medicine, and care of the elderly. Applications from several other interested groups are being reviewed and will be presented to the Board in the near future. The Section of Family Physicians with Special Interests or Focused Practices will soon be inviting College members to sign up (no fee will be required) to let us know which areas are of interest to them. Each program will have a committee that will communicate with members and will introduce approaches to encourage networking among those with similar practice interests. The committees will also develop continuing medical education and continuing professional development opportunities (eg, at FMFs or Chapter Annual Scientific Assemblies), address policy and advocacy issues, and oversee the development of enhanced skills training opportunities, where appropriate. The new section is intended for family physicians who include areas of special interest as part of their broad-scope practices as well as those who commit greater portions of their career time to these areas. The goal is to help all family physicians learn and work together in a way that will strengthen comprehensive continuing care delivered in family practices for patients across Canada.

Family Medicine Forum 2009 welcomed several hundred medical students and family medicine residents, who, as always, provided incredible enthusiasm and energy to the week's events. They reminded all of us that the past 3 years have seen increasing numbers of students once again selecting family medicine as their career choice. It was inspiring to have them with us at the same time as we welcomed and honoured Dr Ian McWhinney, the father of the discipline of family medicine in Canada, and Dr Patrick Rose, the last surviving founding member of our College, who celebrated his 94th birthday on stage during the installation of our 2009-2010 National President Dr Cathy MacLean. Our past and our future were together in one place and have never shone more brilliantly.

All of us at the College wish everyone a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season. 

Reference

1. College of Family Physicians of Canada. *Patient-centred primary care in Canada: bring it on home*. Mississauga, ON: College of Family Physicians of Canada; 2009. Available from: www.cfpc.ca/local/files/CME/FMF_2009/news/Bring%20it%20on%20Home%20FINAL%20ENGLISH.pdf. Accessed 2009 Nov 6.

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