

A letter to the profession from CPSA Council

Sept. 27, 2021

As we write this message, we are seeing the highest number of patients admitted to Alberta hospitals (and more specifically ICUs) than we have seen since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of these patients are unvaccinated and our regulated members, nurses, healthcare teams and support staff are continuing to work incredibly hard to address the escalating demands. As professionals who have committed your lives to supporting patients, we understand burnout and personal mental, emotional and physical suffering is at an all-time high. We don't have an endless supply of people to continue the battle against COVID-19, so every decision we make as a profession and as individuals is critical to our long-term success and frankly, survivability.

We, as CPSA Council, met on Sept. 20 to discuss this crisis. During the discussion we unanimously agreed that, as part of the profession's social responsibility to protect Albertans, all regulated members should be fully vaccinated. There is a deep concern that those who have chosen not to be vaccinated are contributing to the public health emergency we are in today. Council and CPSA's leadership team are also very perturbed by a small number of physicians who are spreading misinformation and even prescribing medications when there is no evidence of their benefits in treating COVID-19.

We, as CPSA's Council and leadership, do not believe these practices align with a physician's professional responsibilities to their patients—they are in fact having a direct impact on the fourth wave of the pandemic. We are taking a stronger stance against these actions and want to be transparent in our expectations of the profession.

We strongly urge all regulated members to get vaccinated, trust reputable science and provide evidence-based care. Spreading misinformation, issuing unsubstantiated exemptions or deferrals for vaccinations or masking, using treatments not grounded in evidence, and diverting people from valid prevention or treatment options directly puts patients and the public at risk. Our goal remains to approach such situations from a learning perspective and look for ways to guide appropriate, professional conduct. But if a regulated member chooses to defy that guidance and put public safety at risk, a formal complaint and any consequences that follow should be expected.

We must focus on getting as many Albertans vaccinated as soon as possible. Every visit and interaction a physician



has with a patient is an opportunity for another Albertan to get vaccinated. It's important to listen to your patients' concerns, and not place judgement on those who are struggling with their decision to get vaccinated; not everyone contemplating the vaccine is an "anti-vaxxer". Those who are open to guidance should be provided accurate information to help them make an informed decision. There is however no expectation that you engage in arguments with people who have fixed opinions.

Thank you to those who continue to practice safe, evidence-based medicine. This is a time for everyone in the medical profession to support each other in making appropriate, clinical decisions for the good of Albertans and the healthcare system.

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