



December 12, 2024

Dear Members,

In late October, the SFM Executive invited practicing family physicians across Alberta to complete a survey to help us better understand the constituents we represent and the issues that matter most to them. I want to extend my thanks to everyone who took the time to complete the survey and update you on what we heard.

At the launch of the survey, we explained that as your elected representatives within the AMA and at various health tables, we needed a current and accurate understanding of our members' concerns, values and priorities, and how the crisis in family medicine is impacting both you and your patients. We asked for your thoughts and you didn't hold back. You shared insights that were unflinchingly honest and, at times, bleak.

In total, we received 497 responses from family physicians across the province that painted a picture of a profession that is overwhelmed, underappreciated and increasingly frustrated with delivering the care we know our patients need.

Most of you who completed the survey (71%) practice comprehensive longitudinal care. Financial strain, resource shortages and overwhelming workloads emerged as common themes. Many of you (35%) said you were considering a career transition or a practice shift in the next year, with 56% of respondents indicating they were considering leaving their practice in the next five years. Financial concerns, burnout and lack of support were identified as significant factors.

When it came to questions that asked you to agree or disagree with statements about your practice, 58% disagreed that you had the financial resources needed to manage and maintain your practice and 63% disagreed that your compensation allowed you to achieve your personal financial goals. The question that asked if the volume of work you are expected to do is reasonable saw a total of 81% who disagreed.

Your comments were equally frank. We heard that if you knew medicine would turn out this way, you would have chosen a different profession. We heard that longitudinal family medicine is dying and that you felt guilty about leaving your patients, but despondent about continuing to do what you have been doing. Some of you simply wished us good luck in trying to address the crisis in family medicine. The overwhelming sense was of a group of physicians who are disenfranchised, disillusioned and burned out.

So, what do we do with this information? The SFM Executive has begun reviewing the data and will be digging deeper into the themes you identified. Truthfully, much of what emerged as part of the survey is not new – it reflects many of the same issues we have heard during town halls and in conversations with colleagues. It also echoes what we are experiencing in our own practices. We are deciding who needs to

see this data, and will be disseminating it as appropriate, including reaching out to the new Primary Care Alberta agency to ensure they understand the reality Alberta's family physicians are facing. I have also shared some of the data with AMA leadership, who are already exploring what they can do to create additional supports for members. I know the stress and burnout many of us are feeling can be magnified at this time of year and I want to remind you that the AMA's Physician and Family Support Program (PFSP) provides confidential support year-round to AMA members.

I believe that at least some of the issues relating to compensation will be addressed by the PCCM. While we are all tired of waiting, we have been repeatedly assured that the PCCM will be operationalized April 1, 2025. Further, we are hopeful that an announcement on implementation will happen before the end of this year. Once that announcement is made, the AMA and ACTT will move quickly to help family physicians and rural generalists determine if the model is right for them so they can begin getting ready for implementation. There will be a lot of work to do in a short amount of time, and tools and resources are already being developed so they are ready to launch quickly. Assuming the announcement occurs this month, we will be hosting a town hall early in January to provide further information. I will share details as soon as we have them.

Thank you again to those who participated in this benchmark survey. Your SFM Executive will further analyze the data and explore the next steps regarding future surveys and actions over the coming weeks, and I will report back.

As always, you can reach me with your questions and comments at FamilyMedicine@albertadoctors.org.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sarah Bates, President
Section of Family Medicine
On behalf of your [SFM Executive](#)