



March 24, 2020

Honourable Tyler Shandro
Minister of Health
Office of the Minister
Health
423 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

via: health.minister@gov.ab.ca

Re: Meeting Requested March 17, 2020

Dear Minister Shandro:

This is further to my letter of March 17, 2020 in which I requested an urgent meeting to discuss two items:

- Delaying implementation of your Physician Funding Framework that is currently planned for 1 April, 2020.
- Implementation of codes or other necessary payments to allow patient care in a safe, appropriate and timely fashion during the pandemic.

With respect to the second point, I want to thank you and Alberta Health for all the efforts of the past week to improve the billing codes for virtual care. The work done between Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services and the Alberta Medical Association demonstrates our ability to effectively respond to issues in challenging times.

With respect to the first item, we would appreciate hearing from you on this matter as quickly as possible. This deadline is quickly upon us next week. Favorable consideration of this request would go a long way to easing immediate concerns among physicians, allowing them to focus on their patients during this critical time. This would also provide us with additional time to discuss and work collaboratively through issues outlined in my previous letter. While we would suggest that the entire framework implementation be deferred, there are three particular components to which I would draw your attention.

These are:

- Medical Liability Reimbursement – The proposed changes will bring Alberta to the lowest level of coverage of any province. Liability protection is a practice requirement in all provinces and the cost needs to either be reflected in higher fees

for those services that attract liability, or through a reimbursement program, as has been in place in Alberta. Lowering the program reimbursement level without changing fees for high-risk services creates a significant challenge.

- AHS Overhead discounts, Physician On-call, and AHS Stipends – The issue of AHS Stipends has been delayed until September, which is appreciated. The issue of how AHS overhead support will now be treated in the Schedule of Medical Benefits, however, remains a challenge. There continues to be a variety of arrangements in place and we are simply adding to the complexity of the payment system by attempting to reflect all of them. The AMA agrees that a clearer policy on how AHS supports overhead expenses is needed and believes this policy should be established before changing the Schedule of Medical Benefits.
- Capping of patient visits – In a pandemic situation with great uncertainty as to service needs, we would suggest postponing these limits.

I believe the above suggestions are reasonable and allow all of us to focus our energies on the COVID-19 challenge. It is important for all of us to work together and to be seen to work together.

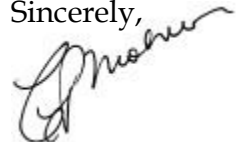
I also recognize the fiscal challenges facing our province and commit to work with you on the following:

- To work within the budget established for physicians of \$5.4B. We suggest that some consideration of the impact of COVID-19 will need to be considered, but trust that government and the AMA can come to understanding on this.
- To develop, in concert with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, a full strategy to meet the budget. This includes consideration of the following:
 - Review of the Consultation Proposals. As noted earlier, the AMA believes that several of these have merit but require additional work
 - Across-the-board adjustments as necessary
 - A physician compensation strategy aimed towards a fair allocation of the available amounts to physicians and value for patients
- To work with AH and AHS on a full review of the roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and authorities in regards to physician expenditures, the review to be carried out in the manner that has been discussed between AH and AMA representatives.
- To develop an agreement between the AMA and Alberta Health, covering the above issues as well as those related to the Physician Compensation Advisory Committee, continuance and so on.

Work on all of this can begin immediately. I believe that we can have things in place in the next few weeks, ensuring that, on the other side of this pandemic, we are well positioned to build the best possible health care system for Albertans.

I understand the pressures on you and, indeed, the entire health care system that you lead. I believe these issues are important, however, and request that we meet to discuss them within the next two days.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Molnar".

Christine P. Molnar, MD, FRCPC
President

cc: Lorna Rosen, Deputy Minister, Office of the Deputy Minister of Health
AMA Representative Forum
AMA Board of Directors
Mike Gormley, AMA Executive Director