



A lens of hope

As doctors, we are committed to the noble cause of making things better for our patients. Hundreds of years ago, Avicenna, one of the most eminent physicians and philosophers of his time, defined a physician's key responsibility as providing hope to patients in times of distress. Today, when the health care system is facing numerous challenges and many patients struggle to access and receive care, where does the hope come from? It comes from where it always has—our commitment to making things better, together.

As part of Doctors of BC's new 5-year strategic plan, we have made it our mission to "support BC's doctors to be leaders in delivering and improving patient care." This mission statement was created to both acknowledge and emphasize the most important role doctors play in our patients' lives: providing quality, evidence-based care in a timely manner. We must put patients and their needs at the centre of every health care conversation. In an increasingly fragmented system, we also need to ensure the care we provide both is culturally safe and values every patient as an individual. The more we focus on providing care in this manner, the more we will continue to be seen as trusted leaders and partners in improving the health care system.

This model of care works. In Whistler, after years of challenges providing health care to residents, doctors came together with local community leaders to create the Whistler 360 Health Collaborative Society. This society operates a community-governed medical clinic, which alleviates the administrative burden doctors encounter in running

a clinic and allows them to focus on looking after patients. With support from the Longitudinal Family Physician Payment Model, the clinic looks after 1000 more patients than it did before, increasing its capacity for patient care by 50%.

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An important part of this vision is helping doctors achieve professional satisfaction by feeling valued. Increasingly, the administrative burdens of practice have led to concerns about physician wellness and burnout. Further, focusing on these nonclinical tasks devalues physicians and decreases their connection to individual patients. In the last Physician Master Agreement, important efforts were made to decrease administrative burdens by creating a collaborative space with the Ministry of Health and health authorities, known as the Administrative Burdens Working Group. The goal is, over time, to reduce the nonclinical administrative work physicians do in order to increase their ability to provide direct patient care. The more time doctors spend with patients, the more satisfaction and joy they will experience in their work and the better health outcomes for patients will be.

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need and deserve. This will require us to work together in new ways and collaborate with those we see eye to eye with and those who offer a different perspective. Take the referral process as an example. This was felt to be a key source of administrative burden for family doctors and consulting specialists, but through difficult conversations with each other and collaboration with the Ministry of Health via the Tariff Committee, Doctors of BC was able to deliver on major changes that will help reduce the indirect patient care workload for all doctors.

Effective leadership and partnership require trust. By focusing every conversation on how to provide patients with the best care possible, trust from the community and from our colleagues will follow. There is much work to be done, and it begins with looking at the future through a lens of hope. ■

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Doctors of BC President