

The Value of Strong Medical Staff Associations (MSAs)

Dear members,

As I write my last letter to members as the President of the EZMSA, I find myself reflecting on the critical role a strong MSA plays in the day-to-day lives of physicians. As we face a global shortage of physicians, it is the work of MSAs that will help address physician retention and support a healthy clinical environment. MSAs bring us together in important ways, by building networks and friendships, and celebrating each other. The pandemic has reduced our ability to build the social ties that help us do our work. MSAs are working to strengthen existing ties and establish new ones. The workload is extreme, and the political landscape is making our work even more challenging. Preventing burnout and moral fatigue requires a real effort to foster the relationships that create communities of practice, helping us feel we are not alone. MSAs play a key role in ensuring that the work environment is responsive to what we need to do our jobs well, stay engaged, and remain healthy.

Over the last few years, the role of the EZMSA has grown to include a much stronger focus on advocacy; both within the health system but even more so within the public sphere by being a reliable voice of evidence-based health information for our community. Over the last year we have supported the work of our opioid poisoning committee and our election platform committee. We have produced a COVID vaccine video to help fill the void created by an increasingly politicized public health narrative, providing up-to-date, evidence-based advice on vaccine boosters. The EZMSA is known throughout our community, and we have established an excellent working relationship with our city council. When the provincial government refuses to meaningfully engage with physicians on issues, we have learned the value of taking the message directly to our community.

But it is the less public work we do within the health system that I want to highlight – the larger an organization gets, the more at risk it is of becoming disconnected from the frontline workforce. MSAs help bridge that gap by bringing the values and concerns of physicians to critical conversations about policy, process, and health system decisions, playing key roles on committees at both the provincial and local levels and engaging with organization leaders directly as issues arise. Behind the scenes, we work hard to ensure health organizations remain true to their value of accountability to the frontline and the patients we care for. As health care professionals we are expected to do better because our ethical and professional obligations ask more of us. Reciprocity demands that our health care organizations also do better and lead with authenticity and fidelity to core values. Over the past year, we have been the confidential trusted conduit for workers needing to bring issues of workplace safety to the attention of leaders and we have fought for the importance of engagement with stakeholders when organization decisions impact on our work and learning environment.

Grassroots advocacy is about ensuring that the system works with us and that solutions for the clinical space meaningfully include us in their creation. The EZMSA has the strength of both community and hospital-based voices to help bring a diversity of perspectives to the issues that are important to physicians. From the development of the physician advisor role to help navigate conflict within the system, to our advocacy for streamlined referral processes that will reduce administrative burdens and help patients get access to the care they need, the EZMSA has responded to member needs.

There is strength and safety in numbers. Together we can advocate for the changes that we need to do our work for our community. We are here to help amplify your voice and ensure you get heard by those who may be able to help.

Now, more than ever, we need to grow the EZMSA and continue its work. Please spread the word about our work to colleagues throughout the zone. Consider getting more involved by putting your name forward when opportunities arise. There are numerous committees and working groups with which members can get involved, with the bonus of working with great colleagues and extending the impact our profession has on our organizations and community.

My tenure as President with the EZMSA has been a time of hard work, but also growth and I have benefited from the most amazing Executive. Their support and wisdom are much appreciated. Thank you to Bobbie Jo Hawkes for all the hard work. I look forward to 2023 and supporting the EZMSA as Past-President.

Regards,



Dr. Cheryl Mack
President 2022