

Good morning EZMSA members,

Welcome to fall. I hope you had the opportunity for rest over the summer as we face many issues in the health system and our colleagues feel the increased strain. Please stay well and remember that the Alberta Medical Association's [Physician and Family Support Program is available](#).

### **Open Executive Positions**

The EZMSA is looking for two colleagues to join our Executive starting January 1, 2022. Nominations are currently open for a Treasurer and Vice-President. Please contact me if you would like to talk about these important positions for our zone. Details are also attached. Nominations are due October 18, 2021.

### **NEW Opioid Poisoning Committee**

Today our Opioid Poisoning Committee is launching. We will be hosting a live press conference on Thursday at 11am to highlight this issue and introduce the committee. Our committee consists of nine colleagues and is chaired by Dr. Ginetta Salvalaggio and Dr. Cheryl Mack. The mandate of the committee includes:

1. Advocating for access to evidence-informed services for people who use drugs.
2. Recommending short- and long-term strategies to the public and government designed to reduce the number of opioid poisoning deaths in Alberta.
3. Being a trusted source of medical advice on a public health approach to substance use.
4. Raising public awareness of the impact of opioid poisoning on patients and the health system

Speakers include:

- Dr. Ginetta Salvalaggio, MD MSc CCFP(AM), Co-chair of Opioid Poisoning Committee for the Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association, Family Physician and Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta
  - The Opioid Poisoning Committee purpose and mandate.
  - The opioid poisoning impact in the community.
- Dr. Stan Houston, MD DTM&H FRCPC, Professor of Medicine & Public Health, University of Alberta
  - The numbers and key indicators.
- Dr. Darren Markland, MD FRCPC, Educational Lead, Nephrology/Critical Care, Royal Alexandra Hospital ICU
  - Stories from the ICU.
- Dr. Jaspreet Khangura, Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Alberta and Emergency Physician at the Royal Alexandra Hospital
  - What we are seeing in emergency departments.

Details of the launch are attached. [To watch the live streaming register here.](#) Recordings will be available on Facebook and Twitter by following @EZMSA2.

### **COVID-19**

The term of the Strategic COVID-19 Pandemic Committee ended as of this summer. This committee was instrumental to curve the spread of this disease in our community and reduce the burden it placed on physicians and our health care system. We thank the members for their advocacy. Their work produced tough leadership when it was lacking from the provincial government.

At present our main area of focus has shifted to opioid poisoning. We recognize the magnitude of this issue has accelerated over the last two years while we were focused on the urgency of COVID-19. Opioids are as equal of a public health crisis given that 1,154 Albertans died of opioids and 1,211 of COVID-19 in 2020. Now in 2021, an average of four Albertans are dying every day from overdose. This issue can no longer be ignored; therefore, we are shifting resources from COVID-19 as our primary focus to opioid poisoning.

### **Social Events**

I remain cautiously optimistic we can begin meeting in person again by December. The 2021 Celebration with award presentations, entertainment, and annual general meeting business is scheduled for December 2nd at the JW Marriott Ice District. More details are to come. I look forward to hopefully being able to see you in person.

Please consider nominating a colleague for an award. Details of the five awards are attached and nominations are due September 30<sup>th</sup>.

We are also hosting two more speaker events this fall. In October we will have a mayoral candidate debate. In November we will have Dr. Elaine Hyshka present on the opioid crisis. To register [visit our website.](#)

### **Virtual Care Apps- Social Media Advertising**

For the month of September we will be advertising on social media about virtual care apps. The ads will be the posters we sent to family physician members and are attached. The three ads are “Albertans need doctors – not apps”, “Alberta’s health care budget can’t afford anonymous virtual apps”, and “Anonymous virtual health apps aren’t part of our health care system”.

### **Alberta Medical Association Agreement**

We are still without an agreement. An agreement is desired and we fear our situation will worsen without one; however, it is still unclear how to reach terms that are mutually acceptable by colleagues and the current government. There is much uncertainty, but I remain hopeful that we will reach an agreement. I continue to support our AMA colleagues with this incredibly challenging task.

Last night we hosted a session on “What is the role of arbitration in labour relations?”. Binding arbitration was singled out as one of the critical deciding factors for some physicians during the March 30, 2021 vote on the AMA’s Tentative Agreement Package (TAP) with government. Many felt that the mediation option in the TAP did not provide a suitable alternative to binding arbitration. For those who were unable to attend a recording will be available. We will send this to members once it is posted.

### **Health Service Delivery**

The issues facing our physicians and our system in Alberta seem endless. Surgeries are being cancelled. This is in part due to anesthetist, hospitalist and surgical assist shortages. Clinical stipends will be ending come January 1, 2022. It is difficult to know what that will look like in terms of service delivery but I think it is safe to say that this will have a negative impact on the physician workforce and ultimately, patient care. I am as concerned as you about the direction our system is heading and recognize the struggles you are facing.

The EZMSA is an organization that represents all Edmonton physicians. Please feel free to reach out to me with your concerns and ideas at any time.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E MacIntyre". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Erika MacIntyre  
President 2021