



CAPA - Canadian Association of Physician Assistants
ACAM - Association canadienne des adjoints au médecin

September 9, 2011

Honourable Madeleine Dubé
Minister of Health
HSBC Place
P. O. Box 5100
Fredericton, NB E3B 5G8

Dear: Honourable Madeleine Dubé

The Canadian Association of Physician Assistants would like to respectfully ask the Minister of Health in New Brunswick to include Physician Assistants in their plans to improve health care access and delivery in the province. This request is in response to the discussion paper put forward by the Primary Health Care Advisory Committee (PHCAC) in New Brunswick titled "Improving Access and Delivery of Primary Health Care Services in New Brunswick". In the discussion paper it is stated that "despite Canada's investment in health services, we have significant challenges related to the timely access to health care services and that in order to overcome current and future challenges facing the medical system we need to establish an innovative and effective health care system to be able to provide sustainable clinical health services". Physician Assistants can be part of the solution to overcoming these challenges.

PA's are physician extenders and not independent practitioners; they work with a degree of autonomy, negotiated and agreed on by the supervising physician(s) and the PA. Utilizing PA's to support physicians clinical practice improves patient-centered care and allows the concentration of the expert resources where needed. This collaborative approach is proven to be essential to providing optimum health care where it is most needed.

Based on the National Primary Health Care Awareness Strategy put forward by the PHCAC, there are four "pillars" or elements that need to be focused on to improve health care. Patient access to health services is one of the major building blocks in this strategy. To address this it is recommended that more family practice teams be established. It is suggested that these teams would be comprised of a family physician, a nurse and/or nurse practitioner. This strategy goes on to recommend expanding primary health care services to include a broad range of health care providers including nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, psychologists and physiotherapist, social workers, and mental health counsellors. There is, however, no mention of the inclusion of Physician Assistants (PAs) in these teams.

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Physician Assistants can be part of both family health teams and primary care health teams. The Physician/Physician Assistant Model is not a new concept. The profession has been in existence for over 50 years with its roots in the Canadian Forces. There are currently upwards of 300 Physician Assistants practicing among different practice settings in New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta and have successfully been integrated into family and primary care health teams within these provinces.

The Canadian Association of Physician Assistants is supportive of the Minister of Health's initiative to improve access and delivery of primary health care services in New Brunswick and believes that by incorporating health care practitioners, including physician assistants into the health care system we can ensure superior patient-centered care for Canadians and improve access to timely, quality medical care.

For further information about the PA profession or for any other questions that you may have, please feel free to contact myself or the national office (613-248-2272) and we will be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I W Jones', with a long, sweeping underline.

Ian W Jones, MPAS, CCPA, PA-C

National President

About CAPA: Canadian Association of Physician Assistants is a nationally incorporated bilingual professional association that advocates on behalf of its members at the direction of a volunteer Board of Directors which represents Physicians Assistants (PA), PA students, and other members across Canada and internationally. CAPA has members in all national regions as well as the Canadian Forces sharing a desire to help develop Canadian health care, and to advocate for the professions' model of cooperative, collaborative, patient centered quality health care.