

CPSA Council met in Edmonton on September 6 and 7, 2018 to discuss College activities and vote on policy matters affecting physicians and the public. Meeting highlights are as follows.

### Standard renamed to lessen stigma

With new awareness of the stigma faced by patients seeking treatment for substance use disorders, Council renamed *Prescribing: Drugs with Potential for Misuse or Diversion* to [Prescribing: Drugs Associated with Substance Use Disorders or Substance-Related Harm](#). The change aligns with language being adopted in other Canadian jurisdictions and is also reflected in the companion [Advice to the Profession](#) document.

### Council gets ProActive on workplace culture

In follow-up to a November 2017 symposium, a plan is in the works to build a more positive, collaborative culture in Alberta's healthcare system. Dubbed ProActive and initially focused on physicians, the initiative is strongly supported by Council and involves other health leaders committed to a system-level approach. Significant research has been done to date on the causes of disruptive behaviour by physicians, which include burnout, frustration with system issues and illness. Physician wellness, peer support, leadership development and alignment of policies and resources will all be part of the plan, which will start to take shape in early 2019.

### Update on actions to address sexual abuse and misconduct by physicians

The College has implemented Council's direction to seek stricter sanctions for members found guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, publish detailed charges for upcoming disciplinary hearings, improve the website so disciplinary information is more apparent (ongoing) and extend online publication of discipline history to 10 years. Input has also been provided to Alberta Health.

### Enhancing Professional Conduct activities

Managing physician complaints has become more complex, partly because informal resolution is being pursued more frequently and requires more time and communication between parties. To address a resulting backlog of complaint files while ensuring complaints resolution processes remain effective, transparent and fair, the College will hire several additional investigators and support staff on a temporary basis. An external review of the Professional Conduct department is also underway to find longer-term solutions for improving efficiency while continuing to meet our responsibility of protecting the public.

### Finance and Audit Committee report

The FAC reviewed the College's unrestricted surplus level and found that the current policy (60 per cent of one year's operating expenses) is still appropriate. They also finalized the next pension valuation report (due every three years) to be filed with Alberta Finance by the end of the year.

A sub-committee is reviewing the College's pension plan to ensure the plan remains cost-effective and sustainable. Recommendations will be submitted to the FAC by the end of the year, then to Council for approval.

The Building Fund will continue to be maintained and invested to accumulate interest. Use of the fund will be revisited prior to expiry of the College's current lease in February 2029.

## Practice permit renewal fee stays the same for 2019

Council approved the College's 2019 business plan (including a risk assessment framework) and 2019 budget, which projects a net operating loss of \$23,000. The practice permit renewal fee will remain at \$1,960 for 2019, while the professional corporation renewal fee will increase from \$150 to \$200. Certain physician-specific fees (e.g., late payment fees) will increase slightly as well.

## New draft OAT standard approved for consultation

A new draft Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) standard of practice will make it easier Albertans with opioid use disorder to get the treatment they need by supporting physicians in using current, evidence-based guidelines. Council agreed to send out the draft for consultation from October 1 – November 30, 2018, and will review feedback in March 2019. Once approved, the OAT standard will replace the current [Alberta MMT Standards and Guidelines for Dependence](#) which has become less relevant as OAT has evolved.

The College is also updating its approval process for OAT to reflect input from physicians and the federal government's recent removal of its requirement for methadone prescribers to apply for an exemption under section 56 of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

## Council considers how technology tidal wave is reshaping medicine

In successive presentations, Council heard information and communication technologies, robotics and consumer empowerment are fundamentally changing the practice of medicine. The changes are happening at light-speed while the regulatory role has yet to be defined within the new paradigm.

The College has hired Dr. Ewan Affleck, an expert on health informatics and chief architect of the country's first comprehensive electronic medical record system in the Northwest Territories, to help develop strategies for navigating the evolving environment. In his presentation to Council, Dr. Affleck said optimizing information flow, not technology, is the most important consideration in system design.

Dr. Affleck joins a College-led working group tasked with developing guidance for physicians around telemedicine services. With representatives from the Alberta Medical Association, Alberta Health Services and the Canadian Medical Protective Association, the group has developed a new Telemedicine Advice to the Profession document which will be released in October.

**The next Council meeting will take place November 29 and 30, 2018 in Edmonton.** Details will be posted at [cpsa.ca/about/council](http://cpsa.ca/about/council)