

DRIVING THE FUTURE OF PHYSICIAN-LED ANESTHESIA IN CANADA – ENGAGING THE PROFESSION

As our health care system evolves, so do the professionals working in it. In addition to the introduction of new technologies and procedures, the roles of different health care professionals are shifting as the health system strives to improve access to care while maintaining or improving quality.

Governments of all stripes are consistently evaluating new ways to improve care and drive efficiencies and will look to a wide variety of possibilities to ensure the delivery of high-quality patient care and improved clinical outcomes while addressing budgetary pressures. These pressures are only growing, especially as we continue to address and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The medical specialty of anesthesia is not immune to this evolution, or to these pressures. With the British Columbia government planning to introduce Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists into their health system, we expect other governments to evaluate their current health human resources challenges and identify possible areas for changes – which could include anesthesia. With change on the horizon in one province, we have recognized the need to reach out to our broader community to ensure we are speaking as one voice as we engage governments.

At our recent Board meeting in November, we passed a resolution committing the CAS to further engagement with our Family Practice Anesthetist

(FPA) colleagues. FPAs are trained Family Physicians that have undergone an intensive 12-month residency in anesthesia, on top of the residency requirements to be licensed by the College of Family Physicians of Canada. FPAs are typically used in rural and remote settings but may be seen by governments as a way to address critical policy concerns.

In principle, we believe that the voice of physician-led anesthesia is stronger and more powerful together, especially as we engage governments on health human resources policy.

The CAS is currently developing a plan that will see the organization engage the broader community of anesthesia providers in Canada – including FPAs. As many of you know, FPAs are used in some parts of the country but not in others; FPAs can currently hold Associate Member status within the CAS.

While we are still working through the plan itself and the terms of engagement, we have committed to exploring options on how to better integrate FPAs into our organization. We will also be exploring how to best articulate the importance of physician-led anesthesia to governments, leveraging as many professionals as we can in an appropriate fashion.

We look forward to sharing more details of our plan, and how we can leverage all appropriate professionals to ensure that physician-led anesthesia remains the standard of care for Canadian patients.