
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services
BC Medical Association

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

VICTORIA – B.C.’s physician incentive programs continue to demonstrate positive results for both patients and doctors according to the 2008-2009 annual report of the General Practice Services Committee (GPSC).

GPSC, a joint committee of the Province and the BC Medical Association (BCMA), was formed in 2002 with the goal of better supporting community-level patient care in communities around the province.

“Family doctors are the cornerstone of B.C.’s health-care system, and through GPSC we are working with the BCMA to strengthen full-service family practice in every region of the province,” said Health Services Minister Kevin Falcon. “From changing the way patient appointments are scheduled, to working with patients to develop care plans for chronic disease management, across B.C., physicians are leading large-scale changes in clinical practice that are demonstrating very real benefits for patients.”

GPSC provides B.C. physicians with the opportunity to participate in a number of incentive programs that support patients with chronic disease, train physicians for the uptake of obstetric and maternity care and aim to increase the number of medical graduates establishing full-service family practice.

“B.C.’s family doctors face increasing challenges due to treating more complicated conditions as our population ages and learning more advanced technologies and medical therapies as they become available,” said Dr. Brian Brodie, president of the BC Medical Association. “But the good news is that the GPSC recognizes these challenges and is doing something positive. More than 15 separate initiatives have been developed to improve the care patients receive and the way in which doctors deliver it.”

Highlights of this year’s report include:

- Hundreds of thousands more B.C. patients with diabetes, congestive heart failure (CHF) and hypertension received evidence-based care last year due to an incentive payment for physicians who apply clinical guideline recommendations in treating these conditions.

- Last year, with the support of the Annual Complex Care Management fee, 2,550 physicians developed and monitored care plans for 108,145 patients with complex care needs.
- As of March 2009, 1,829 GPs had participated in the Mental Health Planning fee and developed mental health plans for 49,697 patients.
- Approximately one-third of B.C.'s general practitioners and their medical office assistants have participated in Practice Support Program modules designed to provide practical, evidence-based strategies and tools to enhance their practices.
- In 2008-09, 2,566 physicians worked with 47,900 patients to develop a personal action plan aimed at reducing cardiovascular risk factors.

Also highlighted in the report are the results of an external evaluation of the GPSC's Practice Support Program. As part of the evaluation, surveys were distributed to more than 1,600 physicians and medical office assistants, and focused on four of the program's learning modules: advanced access, chronic disease management, patient self-management and group medical visits. The survey results indicate that the modules have allowed participating physicians to decrease wait times for both urgent and regular appointments, and have also increased patient and physician satisfaction.

The 2008-2009 GPSC annual report is available on the reports and publications section of the Ministry of Health Services website at <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/index.html>.

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A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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EVALUATION OF PRACTICE SUPPORT PROGRAM

In August 2008, the Ministry of Health Services contracted with Hollander Analytical Services, a national health services and policy research company, to undertake an evaluation of the General Practice Services Committee's (GPSC) Practice Support Program. The evaluation report was completed in June 2009. An evaluation of GPSC activities is a requirement of the 2006 contract between the Ministry of Health Services and the BC Medical Association.

Highlights of the survey include:

For GPs who completed the Advanced Access learning module:

- The average wait time for access for urgent appointments decreased from 1.3 days to 0.4 days.
- For regular appointments, wait times dropped from an average of 5.8 days to 2.5 days.
- 64 per cent of GPs reported a reduction in their backlog of patients.

For GPs who completed the Chronic Disease Management (CDM) learning module:

- 89 per cent indicated that the learning module had enabled them to take better care of their patients.
- 83 per cent indicated that they were better able to identify which patients require CDM.
- 91 per cent had developed a CDM patient registry.

For GPs who completed the Self-Management learning module:

- 93 per cent were comfortable helping patients to adopt self-managed care.
- 93 per cent indicated that they would make self-management an ongoing part of their practice.
- 80 per cent felt that their patients liked self-managed care.

For GPs who completed the Group Medical Visits learning module:

- 91 per cent felt that group visits increased patient satisfaction.
- 87 per cent indicated that they were comfortable conducting group visits.
- 83 per cent felt that satisfaction with their work load had increased.

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