
President's Letter

December 18, 2012

Rural Physicians, IMG Physicians councils hold inaugural meetings

Physician wellness focus groups to be held in January



**Tony Gabriel,
MD, CCFP, FCFP
President**

Dear Colleagues:

On December 7, our President-elect, Dr. Yordan Karaivanov, and I had the pleasure to sit in on the inaugural meetings of the Rural Physicians Advisory Council and the IMG Advisory Council.

These new standing committees of the NLMA will provide the Board of Directors with valuable insight, advice and direction on issues impacting rural physicians and international medical graduates working in the province.

Rural Council

The rural physicians' council is chaired by Dr. Jared Butler, a family physician in Grand Falls-Windsor and a member of the Board. Other council members include: Dr. Wendy Graham, family physician in Port aux Basques; Dr. Kris Luscombe, psychiatrist in Grand Falls-Windsor; Dr. Gabe Woollam, family physician in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; Dr. Irfan Hussain, family physician in Port au Choix; Dr. Amer Qureshi, internal medicine specialist in Stephenville; Dr. Etienne van der Linde, emergency medicine in Clarenville; Dr. Francois de Wet, family physician in Baie Verte; and, Dr. Todd Young, family physician in Springdale.

The rural council's mandate will be to provide leadership on issues affecting rural physicians and their patients. At its first meeting, the council considered the results of the survey of rural physicians conducted in November and set priorities based on that feedback. Lack of specialist back-up and referral pathways was the main issue identified in the survey, followed closely by inability to access CME, difficulty accessing locums to enable time off, and issues around call. The council agreed that referral pathways and timely access to consultations was the most pressing issue, one they would tackle in the coming months. In the short term, the council will review the results of our recent consultations regarding on call and make recommendations to the Board. The council will meet again in January.

IMG Council

The IMG council is chaired by Dr. Mahdi Ibrahim, a family physician in Bonavista and a member of the Board. Other council members include: Dr. Ziyad Altaweel, a family physician in Clarenville; Dr. Ryno Verster, general surgeon in Clarenville; Dr. Ramin Yazdani, rheumatologist in St. John's; Dr. Issam Obeid, a family physician in Corner Brook; Dr. Carlos Enriquez, emergency medicine at the Janeway Children's Hospital in St. John's; and, Dr. Randy Smith, family physician in St. John's.

The IMG council's mandate will be to provide leadership on issues affecting International Medical Graduates in Newfoundland and Labrador. The council also considered the results of a survey of IMGs conducted in November at its first meeting. The survey showed that the most pressing issues affecting IMGs include the need for an improved orientation for new international graduates entering practice in the province; improved access to CME supporting preparation for the LMCC and CCFP exams; overcoming cultural and other barriers to integration in the province; and, availability of residency positions for non-Canadian graduates.

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As its first priority, the IMG council will review existing orientation programs and materials developed by the NLMA, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador, the regional health authorities and the Department of Health, and make recommendations for improvements. In the longer term, the council will be working on a mentoring program for new IMGs. The council's next meeting will be held in January.

Physician Wellness Focus Groups

The Physician Wellness Advisory Committee has retained the services of Corporate Research Associates (CRA) to conduct a needs assessment to inform the development of an enhanced physician health program.

Later in January, CRA will be recruiting members from across the province for five *Netfocus*[™] or online focus groups, including one focus group specifically for student and resident members. Focus groups will last 1 to 1.5 hours.

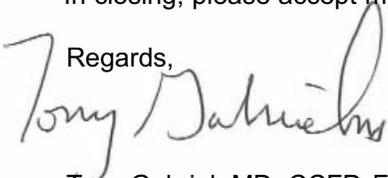
Netfocus[™] involves discussions via a telephone conference call with the addition of simultaneous on-line input (similar to the format of a webinar). Each participant takes part from the convenience of their own home or office and all must have internet access. The technology and approach used for *Netfocus*[™] requires minimal technology literacy skills of participants and the use of this type of technology is time efficient and convenient for participants.

We have entered into a limited data sharing agreement with CRA and they will be contacting members by telephone using the most up-to-date information from our database. We will advise you when CRA will begin recruitment for the focus groups.

Members who participate will have their names entered in a draw for an iPad Mini. If you are contacted, I encourage you to participate in this important qualitative research and help us improve our physician health program.

In closing, please accept my best wishes for a healthy and happy holiday season.

Regards,



Tony Gabriel, MD, CCFP, FCFP
President