

President's Letter

May 22, 2018



Lynn Dwyer, MD
President

Doctors release vision for tackling problems in Family Medicine

Dear Colleagues:

Today, the NLMA partnered with the Newfoundland and Labrador Chapter of the College of Family Physicians of Canada and Memorial University's Discipline of Family Medicine to release the joint report *Family Medicine in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Ten Year Vision*. Our joint paper describes the forces that are creating the current problems in the health care system, the strategies that are working well, and the next steps needed for moving family medicine forward.

The paper is built on the many consultations we have had with family doctors, particularly during the 2017 President's Tour and the recent pre-negotiations consultations sessions. We were struck by the multiple converging problems in family medicine, including the lack of respect and support from the provincial government. The 10-year vision statement is a way to channel our energies toward positive solutions.

We released the report as part of a Family Medicine Awareness Day, which included presentations to the Department of Health and the political opposition parties at Confederation Building. I was joined by Dr. Nicole Stockley, President of the NLCFPC and Dr. Katherine Stringer, Chair of the Discipline of Family. We also hosted a luncheon with medical students and family medicine residents at the medical school, which was followed by a news conference at the NLMA. We chose to release our joint vision today to coincide with World Family Doctor Day that was celebrated over the weekend.

Family medicine in this province is at a crossroads. Our health care system is not prepared to meet the increasing demands of an aging, sick population with complex medical needs. We also have an aging physician workforce and we are not retaining enough of our own medical graduates in family medicine to meet the needs of the population. We need a plan for family medicine to meet the growing demand for services and to ensure our graduates want to stay and work here.

Right now, the health system has no plan and more and more family doctors are feeling undervalued. In my 30 years of practice, never have I spoken with so many family physicians who believe their role in the health care system is misunderstood and underappreciated by the provincial government.

During our meetings with government officials we spoke about the need for a respectful relationship, as well as the creation of a new payment model that recognizes the needs of patients and the nature of delivering comprehensive family medicine. We also spoke about the need for increased use of primary health care teams, increased availability of technology, better use of resources, physician human resource planning, and the continued development of family practice medical education.

While there were no commitments from the Department of Health, government officials were very engaged and expressed interest in our ideas. Unfortunately, Health Minister John Haggie was unable to attend the meeting, but he has agreed to meet with us tomorrow evening.

Doctors want to work in a respectful environment where government and regional health authorities are partners in making family practice a desirable and sustainable career. We want government to know we are ready and willing to work together to achieve solutions that will ensure all citizens have access to the primary care they require and the quality of life they deserve.

Our next step will be to continue this dialogue with government and other stakeholders to begin implementing these recommendations as soon as possible. We welcome and value your feedback as we move forward. A copy of the vision paper is available below.

Sincerely,



Lynn Dwyer, MD
President



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[Family Medicine in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Ten Year Vision](#) (PDF)