



**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

Physicians respond to recent cuts to health services, lack of expert input

For immediate release – March 21, 2013

St. John's, NL –Dr. Sandra Luscombe, Past President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical (NLMA) and St. John's dermatologist Dr. Ian Landells, discussed physicians' concerns today about the lack of expert input into recent health care decisions imposed by government and the potential impact on patients.

She advised that on February 28, the provincial government declared that MCP will no longer cover laser treatment for vascular skin lesions as of March 1. The decision was made without consultation with the NLMA and less than 24 hours notice for dermatologists and their patients.

Dr. Landells explained that this affects patients with facial telangiectasias associated with lupus, Rendu-Osler-Weber Syndrome, CRST Syndrome and rosacea.

Earlier in March, unilateral changes were also made to the adult dental program, which included caps on basic adult dental services. She said that without access to adequate dental care, these patients could potentially end up in hospital emergency rooms, which is an inappropriate use of resources and an expensive alternative to preventative dental care.

“We appreciate that government is facing deficits and it is looking at cost saving measures. When it comes to making decisions that affect the health of patients, government should work with health professionals to determine ways to be cost effective while minimizing the impact on patients,” said Dr. Luscombe.

The NLMA and NLDA had originally scheduled a news conference on March 20, but postponed after the Department of Health contacted the NLMA and advised that Minister Susan Sullivan was willing to meet with physicians. As a courtesy, the news conference was postponed until after the meeting.

Dr. Luscombe reported that Minister Sullivan committed to further dialogue and consultation with dermatologists. The NLMA also sought commitment from the Minister that no further changes will be made to any MCP insured services without appropriate consultations with physicians.

“The Minister was responsive and receptive to our concerns today. We look forward to continuing a positive collaborative relationship with Minister Sullivan and her officials, and to working together to find constructive solutions to problems facing health care in the province,” said Dr. Luscombe.

“If physicians and government work together we will find solutions and efficiencies. If government continues to make unilateral decisions in the absence of expert medical advice, physicians will be there to hold them accountable.”

- 30 -

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