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The role of primary care* in managing COVID-19 in the community remains unclear. Clarity is needed to ensure a coordinated health systems approach.



Strong primary care is the foundation of a functioning health system. To effectively support system efforts to manage the pandemic, primary care providers need three critical things:

1. A clearly articulated role.
2. A concise understanding of the broader system strategy.
3. Relevant clinical knowledge to manage COVID-19 patients in the community.

2

Support is needed to effectively operationalize the transition to virtual platforms.



Primary care providers have a range of questions that are common across provincial boundaries (e.g., accessing patient records, impact on liability). Broadly disseminated responses to these questions would provide guidance to those providers who are either interested in or actively attempting to transition their practice to virtual platforms.

Note: The critical question remains of how to serve patients without the ability to access virtual options.

3

Health system guidance is needed to address and standardize the logistics of delivering virtual care.



There is inconsistency across the primary care community around when, whether, and how to deliver and bill for virtual care services.

4

Primary care needs a clear and unified strategy around mobilizing services to mitigate the negative downstream consequences of managing the pandemic.



Restricted resources, cancellation of elective procedures, and changes in health-seeking behaviours will contribute to increased pressure on the health system once we effectively flatten the curve. Primary care providers are acutely aware of the need to manage non-COVID concerns as effectively as possible.

5

The emotional toll of the pandemic extends beyond the provision of care.



Primary care providers are experiencing several stressors during the pandemic, including concern for the short- and long-term wellbeing of their patients; access to PPE; income stability; practice stability; and uncertainty around shifting models of care. There is a need to support the well-being of primary care providers during the pandemic and beyond to avoid unnecessary strain.

This document provides a synthesized summary of primary care providers' concerns specific to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was extracted from seven webinar sessions hosted by OCFP, CFPC, the OMA, and the Change Foundation. A total of 288 unique questions were analyzed. Key themes were validated via CEP data collection sources such as its electronic survey and Academic Detailing service to ensure alignment.

The insights outlined above will inform the development of evidence-based resources that are responsive to the unique needs of primary care providers during and after the pandemic.

Note: This report will be continually updated as new data becomes available. In addition to questions submitted via professional webinars, the CEP will be conducting interviews with primary care providers to capture a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the sector's needs.

A path forward

Supporting primary care requires a coordinated approach involving policy makers, professional associations, and a single point of contact for the primary care sector to ensure consistent messaging aligned with emerging evidence and system priorities. The CEP is uniquely positioned to support primary care providers as a single point of contact, having established active relationships with providers over several years through our academic detailing and knowledge translation services in primary care. With clear guidance from the MOH on the role of primary care and the parameters for delivering virtual care, CEP is ready to mobilize existing resources to support primary care.

**Family physicians and primary care nurse practitioners*