



For immediate release

Toward Health and Equity for All: Canada's Doctors Release Blueprint for Action

Ottawa, March 18, 2013 – The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) today announced the release of a paper outlining ways front-line physicians can help level the playing field and ensure that more of their patients can achieve good health. *Physicians and Health Equity: Opportunities in Practice* outlines seven steps physicians can take to help their patients counter social or economic factors that are barriers to good health. The paper was written as part of the CMA's ongoing efforts to drive transformation in Canadian health care.

“As physicians, we're not the experts in housing, early childhood development, income equality or any of the other social determinants of health, but we see every day the impact of these factors on the health of our patients,” Dr. Anna Reid, CMA president, said. “If we want our patients to truly be well, we sometimes need to look beyond their symptoms and consider the broader context of their lives.”

Based on interviews with physicians from across Canada identified as leaders in health equity in their communities, the paper lists practical ways doctors can tear down the barriers to health equity. They range from offering flexible office hours and a convenient office location to helping link patients with supportive community programs and services.

“We know that health is linked to income and that the poorer you are, the more likely you are to suffer heart disease, mental illness and other major diseases,” Dr. Reid said. “Physicians, other health care providers, all of us, need to do what we can to help turn the tide toward health equity – program by program, policy by policy, patient by patient.”

The CMA paper is consistent with the findings of a report by the University College London (UCL) Institute of Health Equity in England. Dr. Reid is a featured speaker today at a British Medical Association conference as part of the public release of the UCL report.

In addition, the CMA's National Dialogue on Health Care Transformation is focusing on the social determinants of health. Online (<http://dialogue.healthcaretransformation.ca/en/>) and at a series of public town hall meetings across Canada, the CMA is asking Canadians about the impact of the social determinants of health on their lives and what actions can be taken to mitigate them. The next town hall takes place in Charlottetown on March 28.

Physicians and Health Equity: Opportunities in Practice can be found at:
<http://healthcaretransformation.ca/hct-knowledge-centre/>

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is the national voice of Canadian physicians. Founded in 1867, the CMA is a voluntary professional organization representing more than 77,000 of Canada's physicians and comprising 12 provincial and territorial medical associations and 51 national medical organizations. CMA's mission is to serve and unite the physicians of Canada and be the national advocate, in partnership with the people of Canada, for the highest standards of health and health care.

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