

Apr 6, 2020

Dr. Theresa Tam
Chief Public Health Officer
Public Health Agency of Canada

Dear Dr. Tam,

On behalf of the College of Family Physicians of Canada I wanted to thank you for the leadership you have demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The engagement of health professional organizations by the Public Health Agency of Canada has been effective and instrumental in ensuring a strong collaborative approach to the pandemic response.

I am writing to ask for your assistance in conveying a key message around **access to family practice** during the pandemic.

Family physicians across Canada are contributing to the efforts to combat COVID-19. While it's the emergency departments and ICU wards that are handling the brunt of this pandemic, today I wanted to bring your attention to the community-based practices and the effect that pandemic is having on patient behaviors.

Due to concerns around virus transmission, many patients have chosen to postpone or cancel their appointments. While maintaining physical distancing is a crucial component of mitigating effects of COVID-19, we are concerned that the reluctance of patients to visit their primary care providers might result in negative health effects both short term (as appointments are missed and significant diagnoses delayed) and long-term (as clinics are overwhelmed by pent-up patient demand after the pandemic eases).

To address these concerns, I hope that you can convey the following message as part of your regular press conferences and as part of PHAC's communications to the public as you see fit:

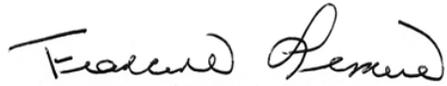
- Family practices are open and family physicians are able to help their patients by phone and video visits
- Patients should contact their family doctors to find out about the options they have, rather than postpone appointments or avoid seeing their doctor for important non-COVID-19 conditions.
- Family doctors are making changes in how patients are received in clinics and how their facilities are cleaned to protect both patients and staff.

Further to the last point, we wish to stress that family practices need to have sufficient PPE and other supplies to care for patients face-to-face in a safe manner.

We hope that this message will encourage patients to not neglect necessary care during this time and emphasize that family physicians, along with their family practice teams, are actively changing the way they provide care to meet the needs of their patients in these new circumstances.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Francine Lemire, MD CM, CCFP, FCFP, CAE, ICD. D
Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer

cc. Dr. Shirley Schipper, President, CFPC
Mr. Eric Mang, Executive Director, Member and External Relations, CFPC
Mr. Artem Safarov, Director, Health Policy and Government Relations, CFPC
Dr. Jeff Sisler, Executive Director, Program Development and Practice Support, CFPC