

BULLETIN

Change for the better

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President's Report, Val Avery

HSA members have known for a quite some time what works and what doesn't when it comes to the delivery of quality health care, and our work in promoting policy recommendations has been grounded in this expertise. We are pleased to see that many of our recommendations are now coming to fruition.

HSA has long called for public solutions to reduce surgical and diagnostic wait times. Such a strategy, we argued, would need to increase the number of surgeries performed while more effectively including health science professionals on multidisciplinary teams, to more rapidly assess patients' needs, adequately prepare them for surgery if needed, and support their rehabilitation.

I was pleased to see the announcement by Minister of Health Adrian Dix of a surgical strategy that dedicates new resources to hip and knee replacement surgeries and rehabilitative care, expands team-based models for pre and post-surgical services, and improves efficiencies through centralizing waitlists for orthopedic surgeons. These changes are a step in the right direction for improving health care delivery in B.C.

The creation of five hip and knee surgical programs across B.C. is a step in the right direction for improving health care delivery. A new diagnostic strategy will see increased resources allocated for MRIs. The government plans to invest \$11 million to deliver an additional 37,000 MRI exams for 2018-2019.

For more than a decade, HSA has worked with the B.C. Health Coalition to defend public healthcare. We are glad to see that these new health care initiatives are happening alongside measures to curb for-profit health care practices that hurt the public system. In April, the government announced it would be enforcing the *Medicare Protection Amendment Act*. For-profit health clinics will not be able to engage in extra-billing, which the B.C. health care system is directly penalized for through multi-million dollar deductions from federal health transfer payments.

On May 17, legislation was passed with all party support prohibiting payment for blood or plasma in the province. Pay-for-plasma clinics compete with Canadian Blood Services donations and deplete our national stock.

These important changes mark a turning point for our public health care system, and HSA is working to ensure that the voices of our members are heard as policy develops.

And just as this issue of The Report was going into production, Premier John Horgan announced an ambitious commitment for a primary care health system that aims to ensure the right health care provider is available for British Columbians when and where they need them.

This May, HSA's constituency liaison program saw 19 HSA members meet with elected representatives in Victoria to advocate for a health human resources policy for health sciences professionals. Members shared their own accounts of how a shortage of health science professionals across BC has impacted patient care.

I am engaging regularly with elected and staff decision makers about policy and programs and the role of health science professionals in a successful public health care system. I was pleased that the minister of health accepted my invitation to this year's HSA annual convention, where he expressed his appreciation for the work that HSA members do in health care and community social services.

While HSA's government relations strategy has contributed to some important victories for public health care, we know that an engaged membership is central to these successes. Coming out of convention, we've received a clear mandate from members to continue to build on the work we are doing surrounding member engagement and support for steward teams. Our members are stepping up to participate in diverse advocacy efforts that strengthen our communities and workplaces.

We will continue to provide members with support and opportunities for involvement so that together we can advance the issues that HSA members care deeply about. I look forward to the work that lies ahead of us.

[The June 2018 issue of The Report Magazine can be found in full here.](#)

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