

December 2, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

We are many weeks now into this second wave of the pandemic, and I am writing with an important update.

As you continue caring for patients in hospitals, personal care homes and in community settings, you place yourself at risk for infection. Even with PPE donned, regular hand hygiene practiced, and other measures in place, providing in-person care is not risk free. The risks are even greater for physicians working directly with COVID-19 positive or suspect patients.

You've been assuming these risks for nearly nine months now without the same support as other health care workers in the event of illness or isolation. While this reflects your unwavering dedication to the people of Manitoba during this public health emergency, it is unfair. It has also been the source of a great distress among physicians.

After nearly nine months of advocacy on your behalf by Doctors Manitoba, the provincial government has agreed to support physicians during a COVID illness or isolation.

This new COVID-19 Isolation Support will offer Manitoba physicians the following:

- \$1,000 per working day of support. If you plan to conduct virtual visits while isolating you can still receive \$500 per working day of support.
- Up to 10 working days of support per isolation or illness.
- A combined maximum total of up to 20 days of support can be claimed during the pandemic.

The new COVID-19 Isolation Support will cover any lost working days beginning September 28, 2020. We realize this will exclude some physicians who have had to isolate before this date. We are proceeding with this package as it will benefit the majority of physicians impacted, but we are continuing to advocate for an earlier start date aligned with when the COVID-19 reached Manitoba.

Doctors Manitoba will administer this support using a similar process as our other benefits, such as maternity/parental leave or the Continuing Medical Education rebate. The COVID-19 Isolation Support is intended to support maintaining your practice, including overhead costs, during your isolation or illness.

Full eligibility criteria and the application form will be available on the Doctors Manitoba website in the days ahead. Applications can be submitted after the isolation period is complete, or the maximum 10 working days of support is reached.

Members will be notified via email when this information is posted and the application process is opened. If you do not receive emails from Manitoba, I recommend you sign up by visiting DoctorsManitoba.ca/email.

So far, we are aware of at least 27 physicians who have tested positive for this virus, but many more of you have had to isolate as a precaution in accordance with public health direction. Nearly all of you face the prospect of exposure, isolation or infection every day, and you can now rest a little easier knowing there is a support program in place.

I want to personally thank you for everything you are doing during this pandemic. Physicians are on the front lines, dedicated to caring for patients with COVID-19, while finding innovative ways to continue caring for all of the other medical needs that patients have across Manitoba.

While you stay focused on your patients, Doctors Manitoba has stayed focused on supporting you. Whether it's expanding virtual care or improving access to PPE, pressing for answers on hospital preparedness or running major public awareness campaigns for the first time in over a decade, we are fighting for what you need to continue providing exceptional care to Manitobans.

We know the pandemic continues to affect physicians in multiple and uneven ways, and there is still more needed to support you. For example, this new support does not offer assistance to those physicians facing major disruptions in their practice due to the pandemic response, such as drops in patient volumes, extra costs to continue care, cancellations of procedures, or restrictions on in-person care. This is a concept that could be included in a pandemic contract that offers practice and overhead support to physicians who agree to be redeployed if and when the health system needs them, and this is an arrangement we continue to pursue with provincial officials.

As always, please contact us with your questions or concerns about the pandemic by emailing covid19@doctorsmanitoba.ca.

Finally, I'd also like to invite you to an upcoming event. On December 10, join us for *Physicians for Physicians* special pandemic virtual event on December 10, for a change to come together for an uplifting and supportive evening during this pandemic while also honouring our annual award winners. You can register at DoctorsManitoba.ca/register.

Sincerely,



Dr. Cory Baillie
President, Doctors Manitoba