



College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

Minutes

2021 Annual General Meeting

Friday, September 24, 2021 – 8 a.m.

Via Zoom

1. Coast Salish Peoples acknowledgement

The president acknowledged that this annual general meeting was being chaired on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh (Slay Waa Tooth) and Musqueam nations, whose historical relationships with these lands continue to this day. The president also acknowledged that all attending today remotely are located on territories of First Nations across this great province.

2. Call to order

A quorum being present, Dr. B.A. Priestman, president, called the annual general meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

3. Adoption of the minutes – Annual General Meeting, September 25, 2020

The following resolution was MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED:

RESOLUTION 21-1098

RESOLVED that the minutes for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC's Annual General Meeting held September 25, 2020, be adopted as published on the College website.

4. Presentation of audited financial statements

The audited financial statements for the year ending February 28, 2021, have been approved by the Board and published on the College website.

5. Appointment of auditors

The following resolution was MOVED, SECONDED and CARRIED:

RESOLUTION 21-1099

RESOLVED that the firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP be appointed as auditors for the current fiscal year.

6. In memoriam

The president acknowledged registrants that passed away between March 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021.

At the request of the president, deceased registrants were remembered by a moment of silence.

7. President's report

The president acknowledged that we continue to live in extraordinary times where uncertainty prevails; where our daily lives are still consumed with a pandemic; and overworked health care professionals are stretched beyond capacity. While people have repeatedly shown their ability to withstand adversity, there is no doubt this past year has affected us all in some way.

With COVID-19 as the pervasive context, the College forged ahead with the priorities that the Board established at the beginning of the year. In doing so, the College was able to adjust, even evolve, during these unprecedented times while still fulfilling its mandate of public protection.

The College remains steadfast in supporting the Provincial Health Officer's response to COVID-19. Vaccinations have offered hope that the pandemic could soon end. For its part as a regulator, the College started contacting retired registrants in February 2021, inviting them to re-register to assist with COVID-19 vaccinations. To date, 138 have heeded this call and stepped up to support BC's vaccination plan. The president thanked physicians who re-registered, and to all those who continue to work tirelessly on the front-line to care for patients during this difficult time.

While BC's vaccination rate is encouraging, achieving herd immunity continues to be impeded by those who are vaccine hesitant. The College has expressed concern about the false information that may be influencing some vaccine resisters on social media and other channels. In response, in May of this year, the College issued a joint statement with the First Nations Health Authority reminding registrants of their professional and ethical obligations to be guided by scientific evidence. While we all look forward to a new-normal, misinformation that is contrary to public health orders at this critical stage has the potential to put patients at risk and, and will no doubt delay the collective progress to end the pandemic.

The College was also acutely aware this past year of the opioid crisis raging in BC and across Canada. Reports have shown that the pandemic further exacerbated the risks and potential for harm among patients with opioid use disorder and other substance use disorders.

On July 15, 2021, the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, and the BC Ministry of Health released a policy direction paper entitled: *Access to Prescribed Safer Supply in British Columbia*.

The College recognizes that providing pharmaceutical-grade alternatives to the toxic street supply, both in the context of a comprehensive treatment plan or as a standalone harm reduction strategy, allows registrants to support patients with opioid use disorder and may reduce their risk of overdose and death. The College will continue to review its position as the prescription safe supply initiative evolves, and as regional and provincial clinical practice guidelines are developed.

Dr. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's report, *In Plain Sight*, exposed the extent to which Indigenous-specific racism exists in the health-care system in BC. In its response, the College made a public commitment to critically review its own operations and processes to ensure the safety and well-being of Indigenous patients. This commitment was highlighted last October when the College Board added cultural safety

and humility as a core pillar of its 2021-2024 Strategic Plan. Since then, progress has been made on several fronts to help achieve the priorities that support that pillar.

This includes:

- hiring a complaints navigator trained in trauma-informed care and conducting an audit of the existing complaints process to ensure Indigenous people feel safe and supported when filing a complaint;
- developing a *Cultural Safety and Humility* practice standard with extensive consultation with registrants, the public and members of the Indigenous community; and
- in August 2021, a rebranding process was launched with a key goal of replacing the College crest, which is a distinctly colonial symbol. The intention is to replace the crest with a new visual identity that reflects the College's current values of inclusivity and accessibility.

The College also continues to apply the lens of cultural safety and humility to areas such as:

- governance and decision making;
- broadening Indigenous membership on College Board and committees; and
- providing training and education to employees, board and committee members in cultural safety and humility, unconscious bias and trauma-informed care.

While these are signs of progress, the discovery of the remains of 215 children at the former Kamloops residential school and other locations across the country is a stark reminder that racism against Indigenous people results in tragic outcomes. It makes it clear that there is still much for the College to learn about this country's colonial past and its part in this history; and much for the College to do before racism is eliminated in the health-care system. It reinforces the College's journey towards truth and reconciliation.

Against the backdrop of these major events and issues, health-care regulation in British Columbia is undergoing a significant modernization process as proposed by a Tri-Party Steering Committee, including a reduction in the total number of colleges. This led to this College's amalgamation last year on August 31, 2020 with the College of Podiatric Surgeons of BC.

The amalgamation process was multi-faceted. It involved amending bylaws and regulations, including creating new classes of registration; reappointing a Board; moving records; conducting a regulatory and financial audit; and identifying the types of activities performed by podiatric surgeons to ensure compliance with existing standards.

Since then, the College continues to modernize its practices and processes to better serve the public in the ever-changing times. Examples from this past year include:

- the change to accept complaints against registrants via email; and
- publishing a new *Virtual Care* practice standard to better reflect the current state of complementary care models.

The College appreciates registrants' ability to optimize virtual care during this past year and recognize the many benefits it affords to patients.

The Board's strategic pillars of continuous quality improvement, cultural safety and humility, regulatory innovation, and stakeholder engagement, position the College to be a leading partner in the modernization of health-care regulation.

The Board, leadership team and employees of the College will continue to serve the public by building upon the progress and priorities highlighted above.

8. Other business

There being no further business, the president opened the floor for questions.

The following questions and comments were responded to:

1. A registrant asked if the College has acknowledged the fact that the registration incorporation process takes too long compared to other colleges and if there will be any measures to improve the process going forward. The registrar confirmed that the College does compare its registration times and process with other peers across Canada and acknowledged that there are processes specific to British Columbia due to unique legislation, such as a requirement for criminal record checks that may add additional time to the process. She confirmed that the College is using a fully electronic application for medical registration across Canada. She noted that the College is launching a fast-tracked application process for registrants who hold full registration in other Canadian jurisdiction and have a clean certificate of professional conduct and wish to have registration in BC.

The deputy registrar/chief legal counsel noted that the College's corporation process has undergone a process review, in consultation with corporation holders, their legal counsel and some accountants. It was determined it was best to shift some of the responsibilities formally undertaken by College staff and determining whether or not certain changes to shareholders comply with the bylaws. In conjunction with that, a new question has been added on the Annual License Renewal Form which will allow the College to be notified of any changes. This will allow College staff to focus on new corporations and streamline the process as efficiently as possible.

2. A registrant asked the College's position on virtual care. The registrar confirmed that virtual care is an acceptable method for physicians providing health care and noted that some types of care are more suitable for a virtual environment than others. She highlighted the importance of patients being able to access face-to-face care when appropriate and needed. She encouraged all physicians to review the College's updated *Virtual Care* practice standard that is published on the College website. The College has been working with key partners to ensure the quality of virtual care is met along with providing presentations to regional health authorities and divisions of family practice to determine how best to operationalize the College's standard on *Virtual Care*.
3. A registrant asked what the College's position is on licensing requirements for foreign medical graduates, and if it is consistent with other Canadian provinces. The registrar noted that the College has a national approach to recognize and register internationally educated physicians. Some provinces have greater capacity to do Practice Ready Assessments (PRA) of those individuals who come from jurisdictions where the training is unknown. Therefore, it may be easier to get a PRA in another Canadian province than in British Columbia, but the College essentially has the same requirements around certification, provisional registration (subject to sponsorship and supervision) and an expectation that Canadian qualification examinations will be completed.
4. A registrant asked if clinical teachers are allowed to ask medical students or residents about their vaccination status. The registrar confirmed that the College is in communication with the Faculty of Medicine at UBC on the expectations of vaccine status and what is expected of

learners. She reiterated that the Provincial Health Order states that there is a mandate of proof of vaccination to work in a health authority setting. She noted that this will not be enforced by the College; however, the College will be assisting with the communication of the expectations.

5. A registrant asked when the College is going to start training programs i.e. medical records etc. The deputy registrar of accreditation programs confirmed that the College does have a course on training for medical record keeping, which physicians are invited to attend. He confirmed that the Physician Practice Enhancement Program, in conjunction with the communications and public affairs department is currently developing an online medical record keeping course, which will be available to all registrants as well.
6. A registrant asked if the College would take disciplinary actions against physicians who spread misinformation about COVID-19 and vaccinations. The registrar noted that the College has cautioned registrants about the risk of facing disciplinary action for spreading disinformation. Any allegations of unprofessional conduct would be subject to the usual inquiry and discipline processes of the College.
7. A registrant asked if the College will have any designated clinical preceptors to do clinical observerships for IMGs. The registrar noted that the College does not have a list of people who are prepared to do this work at this time. The College does ask when physicians renew their license if they are interested in designated clinical preceptors to do clinical observerships for IMGs; however, with the difficulties of COVID-19, in-office placements have been very limited.
8. A registrant asked if the College plans to do a virtual education day. The registrar confirmed that that Board decided that instead of an education day, the College would move to focused education sessions that will be available through webinars and online educational sessions.
9. A registrant asked if there are guidelines on medical records when physicians retire from practice. The registrar confirmed that information pertaining to medical records can be found on the College's website under the *Leaving Practice* practice standard. Additional information can be found on the Canadian Medical Protective Association's website.
10. A registrant asked if the College has any comment on the ministry's plan to replace registrant physician anesthesiologist, with less educated nurse anesthetist, and what the College is doing to uphold the safety of patients undergoing anesthetic care in British Columbia. The registrar noted that the plan to bring in nurse anesthetists is currently on hold. She confirmed that the College is currently working with the Ministry of Health regarding bylaws for delegation and supervision of anesthesia assistants by anesthesiologists. She confirmed that there will be upcoming announcements from the College in the coming months.

9. Conclusion

There being no further business, the Annual General Meeting concluded at 8:30 a.m.

Heidi M. Oetter, MD
Registrar and CEO

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