

CMA to set up patient advocacy group

The Canadian Medical Association will be facilitating the creation of a Canadian Patient Alliance to communicate the views of the public on health-related issues. This was one of the resolutions passed by CMA delegates at the association's annual meeting last week.

This particular resolution was debated and supported by delegates in a session following former CMA President Brian Day's valedictory speech last Tuesday in which he slammed union-led health care advocacy groups.

"It is bordering on fraud to suggest that union funded and housed special interest groups, such as the Canadian Health Coalition, represent the public or patients," he charged.

According to Dr. Day, the Canadian Patient Alliance would be an independent body that will "ensure that governments and others are responsive and accountable." No target date for getting the new organization on its feet was mentioned in the resolution.

There were 99 resolutions passed by delegates over the three-day meeting according to an unconfirmed list on the CMA's website. Thirteen resolutions were passed pertaining to the improvement of mental health care, and a blueprint and timetable will be developed by the CMA for a "transformational change" agenda to bring about patient-focused care. This is to be ready for CMA board approval by next February.

Other noteworthy resolutions committed the CMA, among other things, to developing a policy framework and principles for public-private partnerships in the capitalization, management and delivery of publicly funded health services in Canada, and developing a policy discussion paper on the use of incentives such as pay-for-performance programs to improve the quality and outcomes of patient care.

The CMA has a number of things it would like the federal government to do, including expanding the use of tax incentives and credits to encourage healthy lifestyles, setting up a National Office for Child Health, and adopting a national environmental health strategy.

It is also urging all governments to expand the capacity of Canadian medical schools by properly funding clinical preceptors, simulation technologies and e-learning platforms.

The CMA supports "creative solutions" to dealing with what it says is "the medical human resources crisis in Canada" including public-private partnerships to expand medical school capacity, and repatriate Canadian graduates of foreign medical schools as well as Canadian physicians practising abroad.

