



News release

Act now to improve palliative care

Nov. 2 – The Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians (CSPCP) is calling on politicians at all levels of government to act immediately to improve access to palliative care in Canada.

“With attention focused on developing a new health accord between the federal government and the provinces and territories on health care there is no better time to address serious deficiencies in the care provided to patients requiring palliative care,” said CSPCP President Dr. David Henderson, from Truro, NS.

In its new report -- [“How to improve palliative care in Canada: A call to action for federal, provincial, territorial, regional and local decision makers”](#) – the CSPCP provides a detailed set of recommendations on how decision-makers can move to address serious deficiencies in the existing system.

Palliative care is the health discipline which focuses on improving the quality of life of people living with life-threatening illness and includes, but is not limited to, end-of-life care. Currently only one in three Canadians has access to specialized palliative care services.

“Healthcare costs are escalating because we have failed to adapt to the needs of an aging population and the growth of chronic diseases in the population,” said Henderson.

“Continued failure to invest in palliative care will be a lost opportunity to achieve better efficiencies, improve outcomes and reallocate budget to other priorities. The status quo neither meets Canadians’ needs nor is financially sustainable.”

The Federal government has committed funds for home care and palliative care without an implementation plan or commitment to universal access. Canadians now have the right to access medical assistance in dying. We need a similar right to access to palliative care.

“Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Health Minister Dr. Jane Philpott must do more,” said Dr. Henderson.

In order to implement the recommendations outlined in the report, CSPCP calls for three important developments:

1. Establishment of a new national health accord that includes dedicated funding for palliative care, makes funding contingent on governments meeting national standards for palliative care and measures progress through strict reporting requirements.
2. Reinstatement of a Canadian Palliative Care Secretariat to provide standards to guide the provinces and territories in service development.
3. Support for Private Member’s Bill [C-277](#): providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada, sponsored by MP Marilyn Gladu.

“While a number of Canadian institutions are currently pursuing initiatives to improve palliative care there is already sufficient evidence to be able to make firm recommendations on the **immediate** measures that need to be taken to improve the availability, effectiveness and efficiency of palliative care for all Canadians,” said Dr. Henderson.

Canadian Society of Palliative Care Society Recommendations

1. Implement a palliative approach to care, as outlined in the national framework document [The Way Forward](#).
2. Make new investments to transition to the palliative approach to care. Specifically:
 - a. Identify targeted funding to address the immediate shortfall in physician resources.
 - b. Provide targeted funding to universities to ensure core competencies in palliative care are achieved by every medical school graduate.
 - c. Provide targeted funding to universities to, at minimum, double the number of physician residency training positions for palliative care across Canada for at least the next 5 years.
 - d. Make a stable long-term funding commitment to Pallium Canada to enable them to continue to develop high-quality educational programs for all medical disciplines and primary palliative care providers.
 - e. Make a stable long-term funding commitment to Canadian Virtual Hospice to enable ongoing provision of high-quality online support for patients, families and professionals.
 - f. Consider strategic targeted funding for the appropriate human resources and infrastructure to meet the palliative needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations (e.g. First Nations, Inuit, Metis, rural and remote populations, and the homeless, disabled or incarcerated).
3. Set, monitor and enforce national standards for palliative care in Canada. Make accreditation of healthcare services (hospitals, long-term care homes, home care services, etc.) contingent on palliative care service provision to nationally accepted standards.
4. Promote recruitment and retention of palliative care providers, including expectations of wage equity as compared with similar work.
5. Standardize provincial drug plans and health supplies coverage to include all patients who require palliative care and the medicines and supplies needed to adequately care for them.
6. Promote technological innovation such as telemedicine and minimally invasive palliative procedures, which enable delivery of effective care to remote populations and those with the most extreme suffering.

About the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians

The Vision of the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians is to promote access to palliative care for all Canadians, through advocacy, partnerships, research, and physician education. Our membership consists of nearly 500 palliative care physicians, including regional and local program leaders, educators, residency directors, clinicians, and palliative care residents.

Contact:

To receive more information or to arrange an interview please contact:

CSPCP Board members

Dr. David Henderson (President) – Truro, NS David.Henderson@nshealth.ca

Dr. Susan MacDonald (Past President) – St. John’s, NL smmacdon@mun.ca

Dr. Stephanie Connidis– Kingston, ON s.connidis@queensu.ca

Dr. Leonie Herx – Calgary, AB lmherx@ucalgary.ca

Dr. Pippa Hawley –Vancouver, BC hawleyp@mail.ubc.ca

CSPCP Office (Surrey, BC)

office@cspcp.ca or 604-341-3174

LINKS TO REPORT

Full Report – English: [click here](#)

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Summary – French: [click here](#)