

March 22, 2017

Update from Dr. John T. Huang

(President of Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta and Section Representative,
Ophthalmology, Alberta Medical Association)

Dear Colleagues,

The Specialty Care Alliance has sent a letter to the President of the AMA re concerns about the ANDI process and the intent to equalize all physician's incomes.

The letter is in the enclosed attachment and available on the EPSAA website.
(www.albertaeyephysicians.ca)

Thank you to all colleagues who have sent a letter to Dr. Carr and the AMA expressing your concerns and requesting a special Representative Forum meeting to discuss this flawed process.

I encourage all who have not written to do so and express your concerns to Dr. Carr at president@albertadoctors.org and request a special Representative Forum meeting.

As for the unilateral imposition of the change in funding by the AMA regarding removal of payment for pre-operative physical exams done for cataract surgery, I have had numerous communications with Dr. Lyle Mittelsteadt (Assistant Executive Director (Professional Affairs) Alberta Medical Association and AMA lead AMA Ad-Hoc SOMB Rules Working group - lyle.mittelsteadt@albertadoctors.org).

I have expressed concerns that defunding this medically necessary service negatively affects patient care.

The reply is:

The committee had evidence that a pre-operative history and physical examination for cataract surgery done under local anesthetic was a low value service. We were clear in our discussions with AH/AHS that if the ophthalmologist feels a consultation for a frail patient is necessary pre-operatively, one can be requested. We also did mention that this requirement could be lifted for other procedures done under local but time requirements did not allow for an in depth evaluation of which other procedures removal of this requirement would be appropriate for. It is possible that this discussion may be part of our deliberations in the appropriateness committee.

There is no procedure that is without risk. It remains the surgeon's responsibility to evaluate risk and benefit for any procedure. This rule change does not alter that responsibility.

I have asked for a copy of the evidence and am awaiting that information.

I also asked:

If an ophthalmologist feels a patient requires a pre-operative consultation with their general physician, then such a consultation can be made and the consulted physician will be reimbursed as per standard consultation fee?

The reply is:

That is correct but, for the purposes of the SOMB rules decision, we would not expect this to be done on every patient, only those where there were concerns about medical fitness for the procedure.

I also asked:

It remains for the surgeon to make the determination which patients should have the consultation and I can inform my section members as such?

The reply is:

Sure

I asked:

As per the statements made by the committee at the time of the batch 2 changes, has AHS, CMPA and CPSA cleared and approved this decision?

The reply is:

AHS and the CPSA are aware of this rules change and its rationale. We have not consulted CMPA but your section is free to do so if you wish.

I have then asked:

Just so members are clear, the AHS and CPSA are in agreement to the change?

The reply is:

Yes, in agreement but there are some legislative or regulatory requirements that AHS is dealing with. You may want to check with Sid Viner at AHS.

I have contacted Dr. Viner and am awaiting the reply.

I have also asked:

If there are legislative or regulatory requirements that AHS is dealing with, when will such requirements be completed and should the changes to this rule not be held off until it is completed?

The reply is:

Not in our view. AHS was fine with moving forward.

I conclude with a request for all colleagues concerned about the changes to funding for cataract related pre-operative physical exams to contact Dr. Mittelsteadt at lyle.mittelsteadt@albertadoctors.org

I encourage all colleagues to stay engaged and make your views and concerns know to the AMA.

I will continue to keep you apprised of developments.

Regards,

John Huang