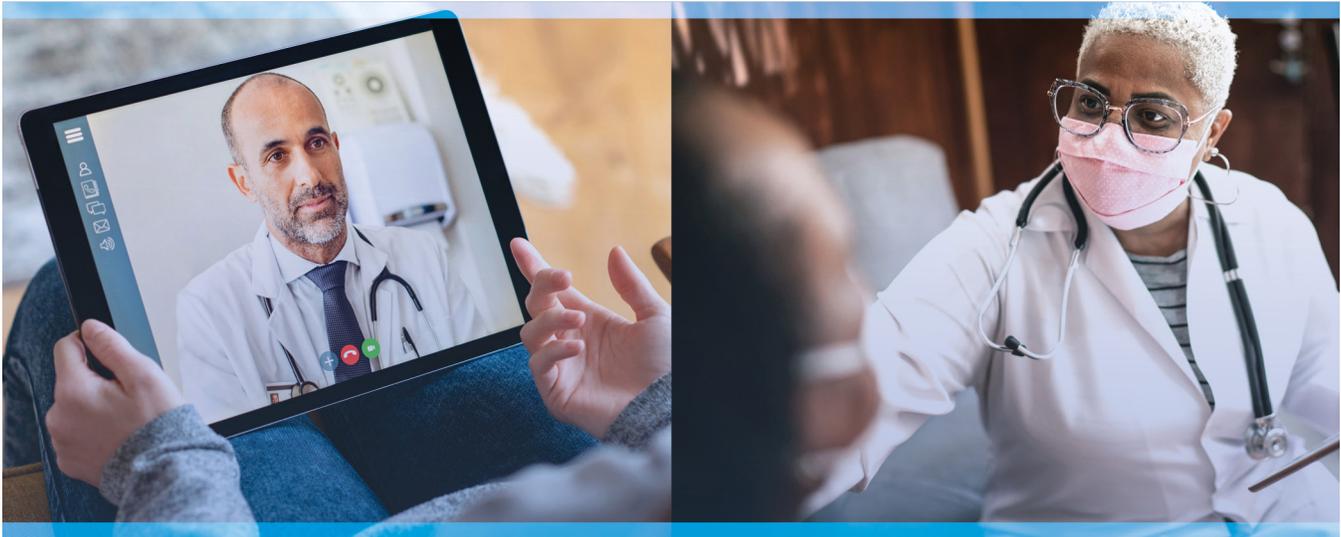




Position Statement

Strengthening Health Care—Access Done Right



(August 30, 2021, Mississauga, ON) Access to high-quality comprehensive continuous primary care close to home is a foundational component of an effective health care system. Family practices play a crucial role in providing such care in Canada. Patients value their family physicians and consistently report the strong preference in seeing them for their health needs. **Access done right** must include access to a family doctor and a team who knows you.

Despite the hard work of family physicians and their teams, the accessibility of primary care has been an ongoing concern. Adopting virtual care, catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, presents a series of opportunities as well as challenges for accessing high-quality primary care.

For-profit services offering access to episodic care by unfamiliar providers have increasingly been used to fill access gaps, threatening system efficiency and continuity of care.

Family physicians report that virtual care **improves access** but at the cost of **quality** particularly for more complex issues, including, new diagnoses, treatment plans, and mental health services.

Virtual care should be one way to access a patient's dedicated family practice that follows and supports their health and health care over time. It must be available as one of the ways to facilitate convenient access for patients. Virtual care must be implemented in a way that meets physicians' and patients' needs as well as the context and nature of the problem being considered. In some cases, in-person interaction is irreplaceable for both clinical examination and building a lasting relationship.

Continuity of care by a family physician working closely with a dedicated team is a key determinant of health outcomes and should be supported and prioritized. **Access done right** means convenient access to a family doctor and dedicated team who know you, when you need it, and for any health problem/condition.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) will support members in enhancing accessibility to high-quality care close to home. Decision makers must assist these efforts and provide additional resources to strengthen the publicly funded collaborative primary care. Our ongoing advocacy will focus on increased support for collaborative practices through:



- Additional investment from all levels of government to support strengthening of primary care in alignment with the Patient's Medical Home vision, enhancing integration of virtual care across the system
 - We call on the federal government to establish a \$2B Primary Care Access Fund to enable progress across the country



- Creation of national standards for quality/appropriateness/guiding principles for virtual visits, including clarity on the role of for-profit solutions
 - Such standards must prioritize optimal patient experience and lead to equitable provision of these services across Canada
 - Health information must be readily available to providers across multiple settings as well as patients using technology that maintains privacy and security



- Support for family practices and team-based care, where everyone practices to the fullest extent of their scope, providing continuity and accessibility
 - Fee-for-service remuneration provides incentive for episodic high-volume care, while blended remuneration would better equip practices to meet the complex needs of the communities they serve

About the College of Family Physicians of Canada

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) is the professional organization that represents more than 40,000 members across the country. The College establishes the standards for and accredits postgraduate family medicine training in Canada's 17 medical schools. It reviews and certifies continuing professional development programs and materials that enable family physicians to meet certification and licensing requirements. The CFPC provides high-quality services, supports family medicine teaching and research, and advocates on behalf of the specialty of family medicine, family physicians, and the patients they serve.

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