



March 27, 2009

Changes to improve Alberta's health care system in effect April 1

Edmonton... Coverage for midwives, improved co-ordination of health services and changes to pharmaceutical programs are among the various changes taking effect on April 1 to help make the province's health care system more accessible, efficient and sustainable for all Albertans.

As part of implementing the government's plan for improving the health care system, Alberta Health Services becomes officially operational on April 1 with the proclamation of the Health Governance Transition Act. The one provincial board incorporates the nine previous regional health authorities, the Alberta Mental Health Board, the Alberta Cancer Board and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. The new board for Alberta Health Services governs all health services in the province, working in partnership with Alberta Health and Wellness to ensure all Albertans have equal access to health services across the province.

The transition of emergency medical services (EMS) from municipalities to the province also takes effect April 1. This move supports a patient-centred, province-wide and co-ordinated EMS system that is integrated with the health care system. Albertans will see no difference in the excellent service provided by highly trained professionals, and will continue to access ambulance services by dialing 9-1-1. The transition includes the transfer of governance and funding of EMS services, and the consolidation of dispatch services. To ensure seamless transition and protect patient safety, the transition may be phased in over the next two years for some areas.

On April 1, midwifery services will be fully brought into the publicly-funded health system, improving access to maternity services in Alberta. Expectant mothers across the province will have access to innovative, publicly funded midwifery services in a variety of locations including hospitals, community birthing centres and in their homes. Currently, there are 32 registered midwives in the province.

Albertans will have more locations to access Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP) registration services. As of April 1, registration services will transfer from the Alberta Health and Wellness offices in Calgary and Edmonton, to 20 registry agents across the province. There are five locations in Calgary and Edmonton; two in Fort McMurray, Lethbridge and Red Deer; and one each in Brooks, Grande Prairie, Cardston and Lloydminster. The new locations are accepting registrations from new Albertans, and can provide general information and AHCIP forms. Residents can also update their existing coverage information such as changes to their name or address. Albertans who have already registered for health care coverage do not need to re-apply.

There are two changes for pharmaceutical coverage as of April 1. The drug Avastin will be

added to the list of publicly-funded cancer therapies. Avastin has been successfully used in combination with chemotherapy in the treatment of advanced colorectal cancer. As well, the Alberta Rare Diseases Drug Program, the first of its kind in Canada, will come into effect. The new program will help Albertans with extremely rare genetic disorders to pay for their prescription drugs, which may cost from \$250,000 to \$1 million annually. An individual or family must reside in Alberta for five years to be eligible for the program.

The Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act will also come into effect on April 1, in support of the new system of licensing now in place for Alberta pharmacies.

Alberta's health care team was strengthened in March with the addition of two leaders with significant roles in the delivery of accessible, sustainable and patient-focused health care.

Dr. Corriveau is the Chief Medical Officer of Health and is responsible for promoting and protecting the health of Albertans under the Public Health Act. Dr. Stephen Duckett is the new President and Chief Executive Officer of Alberta Health Services, responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for all Albertans.

For more information on work underway to improve Alberta's health system, go onto the Alberta Health and Wellness website at health.alberta.ca.

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Backgrounder: links to information on changes in effect April 1

Media inquiries north of Red Deer: **or**
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To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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Health changes effective April 1

A number of changes to Alberta's health system will take effect on April 1. For more information click on the following links.

The Alberta Health Services Board becomes officially operational under the *Health Governance Transition Act*. This Act allows the corporate bodies to wrap up operations and transfer their capital, assets and liabilities to the health authority, and to transition the Alberta Cancer Foundation and the Cancer Registry.

www.health.alberta.ca/about/health-legislation.html

Emergency medical services transition.

www.health.alberta.ca/services/EHS-transition-news.html

www.health.alberta.ca/about/health-legislation.html

Midwifery funding.

www.health.alberta.ca/services/midwifery.html

Expansion of Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan registration locations.

www.health.alberta.ca/health-care-insurance-plan.html

Avastin funding for treatment of advanced colorectal cancer.

www.health.alberta.ca/health-information.html

Alberta Rare Diseases Drug Program.

www.health.alberta.ca/AHCIP/prescription-program.html

Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act.

www.health.alberta.ca/about/health-legislation.html

Alberta's new Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. André Corriveau.

www.gov.ab.ca/acn/200901/25186236002B5-0941-C7F4-6D4B1D3A590522B1.html

Alberta Health Services' New President and CEO, Dr. Stephen Duckett.

www.albertahealthservices.ca/pdf/newsreleases/20090128ceoattracted.pdf

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