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Dr. Alykhan Abdulla MD, FCFP
Chair, OMA Section on General and Family Practice (SGFP)

Dear Dr. Abdulla,

Thank you for sharing with us the recording of the round table meeting with members of NDP caucus. The OMA's advocacy serves an important role to its members. Your comments that "long term care homes are best managed when physicians are leaders both in care and policy" are appreciated. These round table meetings not only "offer solutions to important health policy because doctors live and breathe health care issues daily" but also should inform politicians and policy makers about the current leadership and activities of physicians who practice in Ontario's long term care homes, the vast majority who come general and family practice.

I write on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ontario Long Term Care Clinicians (OLTCC) to address concerns and omissions for your consideration, and for input for future round tables and other advocacy endeavours. I will emphasize three areas:

1. Training and education of physicians in Ontario's LTC.
2. The role of Medical Directors and physicians during the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Palliative care in LTC.

These issues were shared with Dr. Hugh Boyd, Chair of the Section for Long Term Care and Care of the Elderly. Dr. Boyd and I de-briefed this week at one of our regular tele-meetings.

Background

OLTCC is a not-for-profit organization that represents physicians who practice in LTC. Our members include nurse practitioners, pharmacists and other professional health care providers. The Vision of OLTCC is that all Ontarians in LTC receive excellent care. Our Mission carried out through education and advocacy. OLTCC's Value statement is "We believe a dedicated, collaborative, inter-professional team with Physician leadership provides the highest quality, comprehensive evidence-based medical care for LTC residents."

Ontario Long Term Care Physicians (OLTCP) was created as a charitable organization over 40 years ago by our committed colleagues in primary and long term care. In 2016,

the OLTCP Board created OLTCC, a not-for-profit, in order to provide greater advocacy and education. OLTCP continued until this year, providing educational grants for the Practical Pearls in LTC and the Medical Director Course.

Training and Education of LTC Medical Directors and Attending Physicians

In your eloquent comments to the round table you identified the need in LTC for integrated teams working together, and an “integrated virtual care community”. Your other point was training for physicians in LTC. This is where OLTCP and OLTCC have provided leadership.

OLTCC provides the Medical Director Course. Created in 2014, the accredited, MainPro Plus, program is offered annually. The course involves a day in quality management, a three-day interactive course and an on-line component. The curriculum includes legislation and regulations (Long Term Care Homes Act), residents’ rights, quality improvement, quality indicators, infection control, documentation, medical staff oversight, ethics, risk management and resident centered care. The last course held in January and February this year was over-prescribed. There is a waiting list for the next course.

OLTCC was a Participant in the Long Term Care Inquiry. Commissioner Eileen Gillese, who addressed the OLTCC Conference last year, released the Final Report of the Inquiry on July 31, 2019. Recommendation four of the Inquiry report is “licensees should amend their contracts with Medical Directors to require them to complete (i) training required under section 76(7) of the LTCH Act and (ii) the OLTCC Medical Director course within two years of assuming the role of Medical Director”

OLTCC’s three-day annual conference, Practical Pearls in LTC, is the largest conference for LTC physicians in Canada. It has evolved to be a major forum for education and networking in Canada’s LTC Community. This year, the conference will be offered virtually. The virtual option creates new opportunities for LTC clinician education in the future

The full-day interactive course, Long Term Care Practitioner Primer, is a MainPro Plus course, highly valued by our colleagues, especially new physicians and nurse practitioners entering long term care. We plan to offer this course now virtually in January 2021. With the experience of the current pandemic, there will be a greater need to provide more on infection prevention and control, either incorporated in the current curricula, or as a separate course.

The Role of LTC Medical Directors During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The NDP Health Critic, France Gelin, praised her local Medical Director, Dr. Maurice St. Martin. Dr. St. Martin is Medical Director of Pioneer Manor in Sudbury, a 443-bed home in Sudbury. He attended in the last OLTCC Medical Director Course held earlier

this year. Ms. Gelinis stated that “he put in a lot of work” and “stood his ground”. As an example, he “stood-up” to the hospital CEO in order to avoid exposure to residents of the facility. She adds that “people respect him because of who he is”. (To its credit, Sudbury was essentially spared of COVID-19).

During the first fifty days of the COVID-19 pandemic, OLTCC provided daily reports on the data, trends and science of managing the pandemic. These reports continued twice a week and now weekly. The reports promoted an ongoing dialogue with our members and the LTC sector. Major issues included infection prevention and control, proper use of PPE, virtual care and outbreak management. With the OMA, we sponsored two virtual Town Halls. Along with specialists in palliative care, infectious diseases and mental health, our physicians shared their first-hand experience in managing the pandemic. OLTCC participated with the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario in the education and implementation of Managing Resident Deaths during the peak of the pandemic.

Over the past couple of months, the OLTCC COVID-19 Reports have profiled Medical Directors and attending physicians who have been directly involved in outbreaks. Colleagues like Drs. Peter Derkarch, Stuart Egier, Ross Kennel, Benoit Robert, Sandy Shamon, Celeste Fung, Jobin Varughese and others have told their gripping stories. These individuals were in the frontlines of some of the most lethal outbreaks. These incendiary outbreaks were fueled by the usual suspects: lack of PPE, delayed response by public health (and others), severe staffing crisis and outdated facility design. Their stories reveal how medical leadership saved lives. These are the physicians that the politicians and policy makers should be talking to.

Palliative Care in LTC

For the majority of residents in LTC, palliative care begins on admission. Maximizing functional independence and community living is a shared goal. Compression of morbidity and increasing home care results in greater acuity and shorter lengths of stay. Approximately 15,000 Ontarians die in LTC each year.

LTC clinicians provide expertise in palliative care. The OLTCC conference workshops on palliative care include advance care planning, goals of care, critical illness conversation, pain and symptom management. The attendees return to their facilities with expertise to share.

Palliative care is attitude, knowledge and skills. The availability of palliative care consultation varies across the province. Over my term I have been impressed at how communities develop their own resources, including virtual consultation.

OLTCC has an ongoing relationship with Hospice Palliative Care Ontario (HPCO). Our expert colleagues at HPCO have been on faculty at our annual conference. Four of our Directors consult and teach palliative care. In November, OLTCC with HPCO and

AdvnatAge Ontario will sponsor a webinar Person Centered Decision Making in LTC. The notion that palliative care in LTC is inadequate is harmful.

Summary and Conclusion

OLTCC wishes to work collaboratively with the OMA and the Section for Long Term Care and the Elderly. Like many who give time to the OMA and other organizations, our Board are volunteers who wish to advocate for our patients and colleagues. The OMA fulfills an important role to represent physicians to government. LTC physicians were disappointed and dismayed when the "W" codes were completely left out of the last Physicians Services Agreement. While the acuity of our resident and commitment of care increased, compensation is unchanged from 2011.

The COVID-19 pandemic will cause lasting changes to LTC. These changes include better awareness of IPAC, outbreak management, virtual care and on-line learning. OLTCC also prepares for further delineation of the role of the attending physician and Medical Director. All this will build on the current work of our organizations and physician representation.

Yours sincerely,



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Addendum:

The OLTCC Board of Directors are experienced physicians working daily in LTC:

Dr. Rhonda Collins	Dr. Fred Mather
Dr. Robert Cooper	Dr. Philip McGarry
Dr. Anne Hamilton	Dr. Kerstin Mossman
Dr. Louis Kennedy	Dr. Benoit Robert
Dr. Lorand Kristof	Dr. Sandy Shamon
Dr. Janice Legere	Dr. Evelyn Williams

Their background and qualifications are found at the www.oltcc.ca web site.

[OLTCC Board of Directors](#)