



# President's Message

June 6, 2024

Since the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) officially started on May 1, dental offices across Canada have experienced a significant increase in patient inquiries regarding the program and where to access care. The British Columbia Dental Association (BCDA) is dedicated to supporting and advocating for the interests of all its members, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary information to navigate this evolving landscape.

**BCDA cannot mandate member participation in or boycotting of the CDCP.** Each oral health provider must have the autonomy to make decisions that best suit their individual circumstances. **BCDA's role is to advocate for the best possible plan for providers and patients and to facilitate informed decision-making by providing comprehensive information and support.**

## Update on CDCP Activities

### Advocating for a CDCP that Works for Providers and Patients

Throughout April and May, the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) and the Provincial and Territorial Dental Associations (PTDAs) have been calling on Health Canada (HC) to address our concerns regarding the terms and conditions to which dentists must agree in order to submit claims for treating CDCP-eligible patients. While we have made progress in some areas, we are waiting for clarification on several fronts:

Term or Condition	Concern	Status
<b>Unilateral changes</b>	HC should not be able to change the terms and conditions unilaterally without notice.	HC has agreed to no unilateral changes. We await a response to our request for a commitment to a 30-day consultation period for changes.
<b>Patient privacy</b>	Patients must specifically authorize oral health providers to share their personal health information for the purposes of CDCP.	HC has agreed to update the wording on patient applications to clarify patient consent requirements. We await the new wording on applications.
<b>Onsite verifications</b>	Need clarity on when and how onsite verifications / audits would occur.	HC still needs to provide clarity on the process for onsite verifications / audits and whether the BCCOHP would be involved.
<b>Appeal process for verification decisions</b>	Need clarity on the process to appeal verification decisions.	HC still needs to finalize the details around the appeal process and make it available to all oral health providers.
<b>Treatment of overpayments</b>	Need clarity on how HC will treat overpayments to providers, including when claw backs will occur.	HC has confirmed that providers will be held responsible for overpayments only if the error is their fault. Dentists will not be liable for payment recovery if the error is a result of the government, the plan administrator, or the patient.

## Calling for Action and Dispelling Misconceptions about the CDCP

On May 31, CDA issued a [statement](#) calling for the federal government to address the unresolved issues with the CDCP. CDA and the PTDA's remain committed to advocating for improvements to the plan that will enable its sustainability going forward.

Also on May 31, CDA launched the first phase of a national public awareness campaign to dispel misconceptions about the CDCP. The PTDA's are amplifying this campaign through social media. A national op-ed article and advertorial are slated for release soon. Our hope is that this campaign will inform patients on the limitations of the CDCP and help to manage their expectations when they visit their dentist.

## Dentists' Reaction to the CDCP

CDA and the PTDA's conducted a pulse survey to get members' reaction and

feedback on the CDCP. A total of 4,507 dentists across Canada responded to this survey between May 9 -15, 2024 showing:

- Seven out of 10 dentists still oppose the CDCP with 4 out of 10 opposing it strongly.
- Among dentists who are currently not participating, the number unwilling to participate with the current terms and conditions increased significantly. In February, about 7 in 10 were unwilling, whereas in May almost 9 in 10 claim they are unlikely to participate.
- Among the few who are likely to participate in the Plan after July 8, nearly all are likely to balance bill the patient for the portion not covered by the plan.
- The two most common reasons given by over 75% of respondents unlikely to participate are the administrative burden related to preauthorization and a fear that fees will not keep up with inflation in the future. Close behind are the administrative burden of collecting co-pay and the terms and conditions.
- On average, providers are spending 49 minutes a day educating patients on CDCP.

## **Ongoing Issues with CDCP Usage**

CDA and the PTDAs continue to monitor and report to Health Canada several concerning and ongoing issues reported by CDCP-registered providers, including:

- All the practice locations linked to a dentist's unique identification number (UIN) will appear on the CDCP search tool, even if they only offer CDCP services at a limited number of locations. As a result, providers working at multiple locations but only offering CDCP services at limited locations may want to consider opting out of the CDCP search tool by calling Sun Life.
- Higher than usual industry standard rates of verifications are currently being undertaken by the CDCP administrator, resulting in an increased administrative burden. Providers should prepare for verification requirements by ensuring all documentation is maintained and accurate, including treatment rationale. Providers may also want to consider taking pre-operative and post-operative photos to aid in justification.

## **What's Next?**

### **Key Application Timelines**

The federal government recently announced that starting June 27, children under 18 and adults with valid Disability Tax Credit certificates will be able to apply for the CDCP through the application portal. This expansion will make an estimated 1.2

million more Canadians eligible for coverage. Additionally, all remaining eligible Canadians aged 18 to 64 will be able to apply starting in January 2025.

## **Alternative Pathways to Participation**

Starting July 8, dentists will have the option to submit individual claims without registering as official CDCP providers. While the details are still being developed, **Health Canada officials have confirmed that dentists using this alternative pathway will have to agree to the same terms and conditions as those who formally enroll.** Further information on procedures, patient eligibility verification, and a comparison grid of the two pathways will be available before July 8.

## **Importance of Balance Billing**

It is important to note that providers **are permitted** to balance bill patients for the difference between what is covered by the CDCP fee grid and your usual and customary fees. BCDA's Suggested Fee Guide is based on several factors including information from economic surveys and current national and provincial economic climates. **While each dentist is free to charge above or below suggested fees, as dentists we risk devaluing our services if we choose to accept lower fees, which can have significant and lasting consequences on the profession.**

BCDA remains committed to providing you, our members, with all the necessary tools and information to make informed decisions regarding the CDCP. We continue to update our [CDCP Member Information Toolkit](#) on our Member Portal containing **posters, FAQs for dentists and staff, information for patients, talking points for speaking with patients**, as well as sample **dental office email replies to patients**. By continuing our strong advocacy for enhancements and improvements, BCDA aims to ensure that the CDCP will benefit both patients and providers for years to come, fostering a healthier, more accessible oral healthcare system in BC and Canada.