



THE MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO
Suite 307, 170 The Donway West
Toronto, Ontario M3C 2G3
Tel 416-222-8820 toll-free 1-877-632-6682
e-mail info@meao.ca www.meao.ca
charitable reg. number 892267568RR0001

MEAO - an organization representing and supporting the medical conditions of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS)

MEAO'S NEWSFLASH AND ACTION ALERT

March, 2021

Dear Members and Friends of MEAO:

This is an **urgent alert** to the members, friends and supporters of The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario (MEAO).

As you are well aware, MEAO is an organization that represents and supports the medical conditions of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS). Many of the patients with these medical conditions not only consult their family medical physician, but Integrative Medical Physicians in order to access Complementary and Alternative Medicine and related therapies to manage their medical conditions.

You are probably also aware that the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) does not look favourably on Medical Physicians in Ontario using Complementary and Alternative Medicine mostly because they feel not enough research has been done to prove that it works.

Now the CPSO has drafted an updated policy regarding Complementary and Alternative Medicine as practiced by the Integrative Medical Physicians and other groups and therapists in Ontario. The new policy threatens and puts at risk the patient's ability to access Integrative Medicine. **After consultation, CPSO is scheduled to implement this new policy in June 2021.**

The document with the proposed new policy can be found at this link:

http://policyconsult.cpso.on.ca/?page_id=13083

Go to that link and read it very carefully.

In summary here are a few concerns:

- The policy may threaten the ability of physicians to provide Integrative Medicine
- The policy includes major barriers, which may prevent physicians from using many integrative therapies.

- The updated policy has guidelines for discussions and documentation of treatments that are far beyond that which conventional physicians must do and are virtually impossible to follow. This opens up all Integrative Medicine physicians to being disciplined and penalized by the College.
- The negative bias against Integrative Medicine is blatant. The policy implicitly states that Integrative Medicine is unscientific and exploitative. This policy ignores the fact that there is much scientific evidence supporting more natural, innovative and less harmful options to support optimal wellness in patients. It further ignores the fact that Integrative Medicine is a Discipline recognized by the American Board of Physician Specialties.

If this policy is put in place, the small number of physicians currently practicing integrative medicine will either be prohibited from providing this care or will leave Ontario.

The number of Integrative Medical physicians in Ontario are already very few with full patient rosters. And for many of us, the service is unaffordable as the services and treatments are mostly not covered by OHIP, or only partially covered by some extended insurance coverage.

- We need more Integrative physicians not less.
- We need more of these services covered under OHIP.
- We need appropriate research.
- We need to learn from other jurisdictions across the world

ACTION

MEAO is requesting that CPSO withdraw the current proposed policy and instead begin an open and transparent process that learns from leading jurisdictions around the world and that brings together CPSO, leading physicians and patient experts to develop a revised policy.

MEAO is a signatory in a letter of an ad hoc coalition of advocacy groups writing to the CPSO and Minister Christine Elliott asking that the CPSO's current policy be withdrawn. The letter is very detailed and outlines all the policy related issues.

In the meantime, we need you to add your voice and tell your story from the perspective of the patient. Don't worry about speaking about the specifics of the policy. They need to hear how this policy will impact you as a patient or family caregiver of a person living with these conditions:

- If you are receiving complementary or alternative medicine or integrative medicine tell them your story on how this policy will impact you if your physician is barred from providing these services or stops practicing in Ontario.
- If you are a person with these lived conditions but can't access these services, either because they are not available or they are not affordable, tell CPSO why you need these services.

The CPSO is inviting feedback on their proposed policy until March 15th, 2021 before it's approved in June, 2021.

For the proposed new policy on Complementary and Alternative Medicine go to this link:

http://policyconsult.cpsso.on.ca/?page_id=13083

Then follow the links on that page to the related documents and also the document to provide your feedback by March 15th. There is a survey you can complete and a place to add comments in an online discussion. You can also send an email.

Your response does not have to be long. **Your voice as patients is very important to be heard now.**

Remember, MEAO has been advocating for many years for a System of Care for all of you with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (ES/MCS). This proposed policy needs to be challenged or it will impact the development of the system of care for many years to come.

We'll keep you advised of any developments.

Thank you for responding to the Call for Action.

Correspondence to MEAO: info@meao.ca

Best wishes from the MEAO Board of Directors. Stay safe and stay well.

Denise Magi

***Denise Magi
President,
The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario (MEAO)
On behalf of the Board of Directors of MEAO***