

November 5, 2021 - Copy of email sent to hilary.robertson@mefm.bc.ca

1209395

Hilary Robertson
Co-Chair of the Board
ME/FM Society of BC
hilary.robertson@mefm.bc.ca

Dear Hilary Robertson:

Thank you for your email dated September 15, 2021 and attached briefing notes regarding the needs of British Columbians living with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME). I am responding on behalf of the Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. I apologize for the delay in correspondence.

I would first like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the considerable challenges those with ME experience, and recognize these challenges have been compounded by the current COVID-19 pandemic.

We have shared your concerns with the Complex Chronic Diseases Program (CCDP), a program of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). The role of the CCDP includes acting as a provincial resource for health care providers seeking information on best practices and evidence-informed care for patients with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), Fibromyalgia, and symptoms attributed to Chronic Lyme Disease. I have incorporated responses from program leaders in this correspondence.

In fall 2020, the PHSA partnered with regional health authorities, patients, and research organizations across BC to address the needs of patients experiencing post-Covid fatigue syndrome, sometimes referred to as “Long Haulers”. This syndrome includes individuals who have persisting symptoms after contracting COVID-19 compatible with a diagnosis of ME/CFS. This work continues and includes a virtual learning community that supports physicians and other healthcare providers to care for these patients. Information about Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinics can be found here:

<http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/post-covid-19-recovery-clinics>.

The Ministry of Health utilises specific diagnostic codes for Medical Services Plan (MSP) billing and fee claims and has undertaken preliminary work to update the system that supports this. This project includes a modification that will support updated diagnoses, including ME. However, there are no firm timelines in place for completion of this work. When this adjustment does occur, it will require significant change and involve many stakeholders.

With respect to the provision of continuing medical education (CME) and professional development for existing health care providers, professional colleges and employer requirements dictate what standards must be met. The Ministry does not determine CME requirements or provide funding for this purpose, rather there are provincial organizations that deliver CME to physicians, such as the University of British Columbia Continuing Professional Development (ubccpd.ca) and the General Practice Services Committee Practice Support Program (gpscbc.ca/what-we-do/practice-supports/psp). You may wish to connect with these organizations to discuss opportunities to increase provider understanding of ME.

The provision of physician education modules on ME is part of the CCDP mandate, and grant submissions are currently in progress. Additionally, the CCDP has delivered educational presentations during family medicine courses, primary care professional events at the University of Victoria, and monthly teaching sessions for residents attached to St. Paul's Hospital. The CCDP also hosts an international medical research fellowship in collaboration with the University of British Columbia.

I want to thank you again for your ongoing advocacy for those with ME and assure you that we understand ME has a significant impact on people who live with this condition. I hope that you find the information provided here helpful. If you require additional information, please feel free to contact Maura Parte, Director, Provincial Service in our branch at (778) 698-9278 or Maura.Parte@gov.bc.ca.

Sincerely,

Derek Rains
Executive Director
Provincial Services Branch
Health Services Division

I respectfully acknowledge and with gratitude that I live, work and play on the traditional lands of the Lkwungen speaking peoples of the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations

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