

MAHCP Members met with Theresa Oswald Minister of Health June 18 2012

Three MAHCP members along with President Wendy Despina and Executive Director Lee Manning met with Health Minister Theresa Oswald, Assistant Deputy Minister Beth Beaupre and Dr. Brenna Shearer Executive Director Health Workforce Strategies Manitoba Health. The members gave presentations on their respective occupations and the unique and common challenges that each are facing.

Cardiac Sonographer, Donna Lee Samson spoke about the issues facing her profession and the implications to health care if they are not addressed. “There are insufficient numbers of Cardiac Sonographers in Manitoba to meet the increasing demands for echocardiograms, the diagnostic procedure used in the evaluation of all types of heart disease.” Donna Lee also spoke to the issues of burn out, the high incidence of musculoskeletal injuries amongst Sonographers and the need for competitive salaries.

Pharmacy Technician, Gerald van Munster presented members concerns with regards to the expanding functions and increasing responsibilities for Pharmacy Technicians. Bill 41 and its requirement for the regulation of the Pharmacy Technician profession have also raised questions as to how it will impact on their work life and the delivery of care to Manitobans. Gerald stressed that the salaries for pharmacy technicians falls well behind other provinces and falls short of compensating them for the services they provide. “We believe that Manitobans deserve the best health care money can buy and hospital technicians have proven to be an integral and viable component of the health care system.”

Genetic Counsellor, Jessica Hartley explained to the Minister that of Manitoba’s nine Genetic Counsellors “eight of these individuals provide clinical genetic counseling services to patients in the province of Manitoba, western Nunavut and north western Ontario and the ninth individual provides education and support to health care providers utilizing laboratory genetic testing services.” The Masters Degree training program required to work as a Genetic Counsellor is not available in Manitoba nor is the on-going continuing education required to maintain their certification. This is a high stress profession with documented risk of burn-out and low salary compensation compared to other provinces. The maximum salary in Manitoba is less than the starting salary at 7 out of 14 programs in Canada. She further detailed that these factors make recruitment and retention of Genetic Counsellors difficult with the average stay for Genetic Counsellors only 3.8 years.

President Despina explained that recruitment, retention, salaries and self-regulation are a common thread amongst each of these professions, as well as many of the other professions that MAHCP represents. In addition to presenting the issues, the MAHCP members offered recommendations for consideration by the Ministers office.

Minister Oswald has committed to continue with on-going meetings with MAHCP with dates during the summer being confirmed. MAHCP is committed to bring members forward and to have their voices heard by the Manitoba Government.

Participants Thoughts Following the Meeting:

Hi Wendy,

Thank-you for the opportunity today to meet with our provincial Health Minister Theresa Oswald and her team. It was a wonderful experience to step inside a different avenue of healthcare. We get so caught up in our own professions that we fail to see the many layers that make our healthcare system. I am also very grateful to give the minister and her team a glimpse of my profession, both the positives and the areas in need of improvement. I felt as if I were a valuable member to the health care team and my concerns were both valid and heard.

Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity and for giving the cardiac Sonographers a voice in our healthcare system.

*Donna Lee Samson
Senior Cardiac Sonographer*

Hi Wendy,

I thought the meeting with the Minister of Health went very well. I found her to be very personable and receptive to our causes and concerns. I find it very beneficial to have face-to-face discussions rather than e-mail or letters. Meetings like the one we had are good for both parties involved as the Minister also walks away with ideas and suggestions from front line workers to create a better work place for employees. I would also like to thank you Wendy for setting up the meeting and your behind the scenes work, it is appreciated, and hopefully some good will come from it. Please keep me in the loop.

*Thanks again,
Gerald van Munster
Pharmacy Technician*

Hi Wendy,

"I am optimistic that the meeting with the Minister of Health will help us address some of the ongoing issues we have with recruitment and retention and at the very least, increase awareness about our profession. Thank you very much to MAHCP for organizing and I look forward with hope for a positive outcome"

*Jessica Hartley
Genetic Counsellor*