

Message from the EMA Licensing Board and Branch

26 March 2020

To all Emergency Medical Assistants:

First and foremost, the Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board (EMALB) and Registrar wish to express their heartfelt gratitude to all emergency medical assistants (EMAs) as you tirelessly provide excellent patient care under difficult and highly stressful circumstances due to the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Your dedication, energy, and professionalism are recognized and highly valued as you serve to protect the health of all British Columbians.

This is an unprecedented and tumultuous time for our health care system and our society. The EMALB continues to work with key stakeholders including BCEHS and the Ministry of Health to ensure that we support our EMAs and maintain adequate levels of licensed health care providers to combat this public health crisis. As the provincial regulator of over 15,000 EMAs, we are committed to supporting the province's response to the pandemic. Licensing Branch and Board members are developing plans to expedite new licence applications and licence renewals, as well as managing continuing competence reporting requirements without compromising workforce resources or patient safety.

The Board recognizes that EMAs face a number of competing challenges during a pandemic response. Every emergency care professional must balance obligations to the care of patients, the protection of personal safety, supporting colleagues and organizations which rely on a maximal workforce for a sustained effort, vital support and time for one's own family, and an obligation to society as a whole. Additionally, EMAs must stay abreast of rapidly changing information regarding all aspects in the management of this crisis.

We are fully aware that EMAs need to balance immediate benefits to individual patients with the ability to care for all patients in the future. This public health crisis will be a prolonged and deeply challenging ordeal. The Board acknowledges that EMAs may be directed to proceed with alternative, less preferred therapies and courses of action in favour of ensuring the protection of health care providers and other members of the public. This may occur even when faced with critically ill patients requiring immediate intervention. It is well understood that significant moral distress will probably arise among providers who face these ethical complexities in the context of a pandemic.

The Board wishes to reassure EMAs that it recognizes that emergency care during a pandemic may at times deviate from norms of practice we are accustomed to. Current challenges due to escalating care demands, resource limitations and the importance of health care workforce protection will shape EMA practice as it adapts to address the needs of the many over the needs of individual patients. We also recognize that the standard of care during a pandemic may be

different from the standard of care under normal circumstances. The Board still expects that each EMA considers, above all, the well-being of the patient but realizes, that in the course of providing care, decisions will be made in accordance to pandemic-specific medical oversight and public health directives. Please know that the Board recognizes that each EMA must also consider the greater good for our community as a whole.

These extraordinary times are imposing immense pressures on all those who provide emergency care. The Board wishes to make it clear that it supports and commends all EMAs whose dedication and resolve will be absolutely integral in allowing us to prevail in the war against this global health threat. Both Board members are involved in the front-line delivery of emergency care and we are proud to serve alongside with our fellow health care professionals. We will collectively rise to meet the challenges this pandemic presents and strive to help our patients while protecting our capacity to continue to provide care.

Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Philip Yoon, MD
Acting Chair, EMALB
Emergency Physician

Grant Ross
Member, EMALB
Critical Care Paramedic

Amanda Saville
Registrar, EMALB