



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE GASTROENTÉROLOGIE

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Attention News, Medical and Health Editors

CANADIAN GASTROENTEROLOGISTS DEMAND A PATIENT GUARANTEE FOR ALL CANADIANS – NOT JUST A FEW

Banff, Monday, February 27, 2006 – Canadian Gastroenterologists feel that patient care guarantees MUST be extended to ALL Canadians, and not just to the relatively few patients with diseases considered a priority by governments. Current wait times are absolutely unacceptable for individuals suffering from many other diseases, including digestive disease. The piece-meal approach put forward by the previous government excludes the majority of Canadians. The Canadian Association of Gastroenterology (CAG) continues to insist that patients with digestive diseases have timely access to health care.

In addition to developing benchmark wait times, in recent months, the CAG has measured current wait times for the millions of Canadians suffering from digestive diseases. The results indicate that patients with digestive diseases do not have timely access to care. Here are the steps undertaken by the CAG.

2004-2005

The CAG launched the *Gastroenterology Wait Times Program*, a practice audit in gastroenterology designed to measure wait times from:

- initial primary care physician referral to gastroenterologist consultation;
- gastroenterologist consultation to a procedure;
- initial primary care physician referral to gastroenterologist procedure.

Nearly 200 Gastroenterology specialists captured data on 5,500 patient visits from across the country.

Canadian Consensus on Medically-Acceptable Wait Times for Digestive Health Care

The CAG also held a multidisciplinary consensus conference at which 24 evidence-based recommendations were established regarding access to digestive health care for Canadians.

September 2005

The CAG released results of the *Gastroenterology Wait Times Program* and the 24 recommendations taken from the *Canadian Consensus on Medically-Acceptable Wait Times for Digestive Health Care* to the federal and provincial governments and to the Wait Time Alliance. The CAG offered to work with these administrations and requested that the 24 recommendations be implemented as wait time targets. The CAG has received no reply, but continues to advocate that these recommendations be adopted.

February 2006

The CAG is releasing regional wait time data which shows that the situation of poor access for patients with digestive diseases is common across the country.

Of utmost importance in the field of digestive diseases, the CAG is advocating for a comprehensive colon cancer screening program.

The CAG is pressing the federal and provincial governments to guarantee timely access to specialist consultation and testing for digestive diseases.

The CAG looks forward to the opportunity to work with current government to achieve a universal patient guarantee which includes the millions of Canadians with digestive diseases.

About the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology

The CAG was founded in 1962 to promote the study of the digestive tract in health and disease. The CAG is the national body representing Gastroenterology in Canada and has key links with international bodies. Recently, the CAG hosted the World Congress of Gastroenterology (September 2005) in Montreal. The Association is built on broad principles and includes individuals of different disciplines (gastroenterologists, surgeons, paediatricians, radiologists, basic scientists, nurses, nutritionists, health care ethicists). Today, the Association is comprised of over 1,200 members. CAG members are actively involved in research, education and patient care in all areas of digestive health and disease, contributing to the economic and social health of all Canadians.

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Source:

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