

Equity and diversity in medicine

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The cover page features the logos of the Association of Medical Charities and the Canadian Medical Association at the top left. The title 'CMA POLICY' is centered at the top, followed by 'EQUITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEDICINE'. Below the title, there is a link to the background document: 'See also [Background to CMA Policy on Equity and Diversity in Medicine](#)'. The section 'A. RATIONALE' is highlighted in blue. The text under 'RATIONALE' states: 'The objective of this policy is to provide guidance to physicians and institutions by identifying a set of guiding principles and commitments to promote equity and diversity in medicine (as defined in the Guiding Principles section), address equity and diversity in medicine to improve circumstances and opportunities for all physicians and learners as part of our efforts to create a safe, inclusive, and health-promoting culture and practice of medicine, and in recognition that individual protection from bias and discrimination is a fundamental right of all Canadians. To achieve this, we must reduce inequities, bias, and discrimination in learning and practice environments. By embracing the principles of equity and diversity, we can systematically address root causes and reduce structural barriers faced by those who have been excluded from participation in the medical profession or deprived of fair opportunity once practicing medicine because of their ethnicity, gender, ability, or other group-identifying characteristics. This requires that we all work towards fundamental shifts in power structures and power dynamics that perpetuate systemic and structural inequities, systemic discrimination, and systemic racism. The principles of equity and diversity, and the corresponding duty to commit to anti-racist efforts, are grounded in the fundamental commitment of the medical profession to respond for patients. This commitment recognizes that everyone has equal and inherent worth, has the right to be valued and respected, and to be treated with dignity. When we address equity and diversity, we are opening the conversation to include the voices and knowledge of those who have historically been under-represented and/or marginalized. It is a process of empowerment—where a person can engage with and take action on issues they define as important. Empowerment involves a meaningful shift in experience that fosters belonging in the profession and draws on community support. As part of equity and diversity frameworks, inclusion is often articulated to refer to strategies used to increase an individual's ability to contribute fully and effectively to organizational structures and processes. Inclusion strategies are specific organizational practices or programs focused on encouraging the involvement and participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds to integrate and value their perspectives in decision-making processes. Inclusion is often articulated to refer to strategies used to increase an individual's ability to contribute fully and effectively to organizational structures and processes. Inclusion strategies are specific organizational practices or programs focused on encouraging the involvement and participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds to integrate and value their perspectives in decision-making processes. Robust processes for inclusion are a vehicle to achieving equity and diversity. Thus, the process of inclusion can be understood to be positioned at the nexus of the overarching principles of equity and diversity.'

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CMA STATEMENT ON EQUITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEDICINE

What it is

The objective of this policy is to provide guidance to physicians and institutions by identifying a set of guiding principles and commitments to promote equity and diversity in medicine. We address equity and diversity in medicine to improve circumstances and opportunities for all physicians and learners as part of our efforts to create a more collaborative and respectful culture and practice of medicine.

Why it matters

All Canadians have a fundamental right to individual protection from discrimination and bias. By embracing equity and diversity, we can systematically address the root causes that lead to structural inequities and reduce discrimination and bias faced by both those who want to enter the medical profession and those practicing medicine. Promoting equity and diversity fosters a just professional and learning culture that cultivates the diverse perspectives within it, reflects the communities physicians serve, and promotes professional excellence and social accountability, in essence to better serve patients. Evidence indicates that where more equity and diversity in medicine is achieved, physicians experience greater career satisfaction, health and wellness, and a sense of solidarity with the profession. Concurrently, patients experience improved care and a more responsive and adaptable health care system. A clear set of principles and commitments demonstrates that we hold ourselves accountable to recognizing and challenging behaviours, practices, and conditions that hinder equity and diversity and to promoting those that will achieve these goals.

This Statement is based on the [CMA Policy on Equity and Diversity in Medicine and Background Document](#). It is consistent with the [CMA Code of Ethics and Professionalism](#) and the [CMA Charter of Shared Values](#), and draws on the spirit of the recommendations relevant to health made in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Respect for persons

The principles of equity and diversity are grounded in the fundamental commitment of the medical profession to respect for persons. Respect for persons means that everyone has equal and inherent worth, has the right to be valued and respected, and to be treated with dignity.



Empowerment

When we address equity and diversity, we are opening the conversation to include the voices and knowledge of those who have historically been under-represented and/or marginalized. It is a process of empowerment—where a person can engage with and take action on issues they believe are important. Empowerment involves a meaningful shift in experience that fosters belonging in the profession.



Solidarity

Solidarity means standing alongside others by recognizing our commonality, shared vulnerabilities and goals, and interdependence. It is enacted through collective action and aims to show solidarity within the profession means making a personal commitment to recognizing others as equals, cultivating respectful, open, and transparent dialogue and relationships, and role modelling this behaviour.

