



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

NLMA endorses *Choosing Wisely Canada*

Embargoed until 11:30 am – April 2, 2014

St. John's, NL – Today, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association (NLMA) joined with colleagues across the country in support of *Choosing Wisely Canada*.

Choosing Wisely Canada is a campaign that encourages physicians and patients to engage in conversations about the over use of unnecessary tests, treatments and procedures, to help them make smart and effective choices about their care.

The national campaign was launched in Ottawa by the Canadian Medical Association in partnership with nine national medical specialty societies. A new website, www.choosingwiselycanada.org, features educational pamphlets for patients that describe when common tests and treatments might be needed and when they should be avoided.

The website also features a series of eight lists for physicians that have been developed by medical specialty societies with input from physicians across Canada. Each list highlights “*Five Things Physicians and Patients Should Question*” and provides targeted interventions to help physicians work with patients to ensure they get the care they need and avoid tests, treatments and procedures that could cause them harm.

“More is not always better when it comes to health care,” said NLMA President-Elect Dr. Wendy Graham.

“Unnecessary medical tests, treatments and procedures do not add value to care. In fact, they can take away from care by needlessly exposing patients to potentially harmful side effects,” said Dr. Graham.

She explained that unnecessary tests can also result in “false positives”, leading to more unnecessary treatments or procedures.

“We want patients to know when certain procedures have no benefit and to make informed choices in consultation with their physicians about getting the right care.”

In addition to the 9 societies that released lists on April 2, 2014, another 21 medical societies are working with *Choosing Wisely Canada* to release additional lists in Fall 2014.

To be included on a list, each test, treatment or procedure must meet specific criteria – it must be used frequently; it may expose patients to harm; and, there must be generally-accepted evidence to support the recommendation.

The decision about whether to proceed with a procedure on a list is ultimately a choice that physicians and patients will make together. What *Choosing Wisely Canada* aims to do is to make that choice as informed as possible.

Choosing Wisely Canada contends that eliminating the overuse of certain tests when they are not medically necessary will free up resources so that patients who genuinely need it will get it in a timely matter.

“If we can make more resources available by not doing things are unnecessary, we’ll reduce waiting lists and have more time to do the things that are truly necessary,” said Dr. Graham.

While some commentators have questioned whether *Choosing Wisely Canada* is about finding savings for the health care system, Dr. Graham says that’s not the case.

“This campaign is about encouraging and empowering patients and physicians to have conversations that consider best practice. These positions were developed by leading medical experts and are based on hard evidence. These are not grey areas where evidence is debatable,” said Dr. Graham.

“Avoiding unnecessary and potentially harmful procedures will lead to better health outcomes that may indeed result in system efficiencies. But our goal is healthier lives, not cost-cutting. Physicians are leading this effort because it is the right thing to do. As a profession, we have a responsibility to deliver the best possible care that is based on evidence,” she explained.

To learn more about *Choosing Wisely Canada* visit www.choosingwiselycanada.org.

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Dr. Wendy Graham will be available for interviews between 9:30-10:00 am and 12:20-1:00 pm.

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