Abstract:

Family Physicians with enhanced surgical skills (FPESS) have historically underscored the surgical care needs of residents in many parts of rural Canada, often in practice with local specialist physicians, sometimes on their own. They have provided an effective solution to the challenge of meeting surgical needs in low-volume settings with good outcomes including high levels of patient satisfaction both in Canada and internationally. A confluence of events over the past decades including the centralization of services due to regionalization, increasing levels of sub-specialization and the lack of standardize curriculum and training, have led to the attrition of FPESS services in Western Canada. Research has shown that the loss of these services destabilizes not only local access to rural surgical care but to maternity care as well, leading to worse population-level outcomes. The attrition has also led to increased challenges recruiting and retaining practitioners due to the lack of supportive infrastructure. However, although a strong evidence base may provide the foundation for a health services correction, change is only possible through the intertwining of such evidence with political strategy. This talk will review both the evidence and the politics that have led to the publication of the Joint Position Paper on Rural Surgery and Operative Delivery and strategies to implement the agenda that the paper has proposed.