

Your Anger Won't Fix Our Broken Healthcare System

ABSTRACT

Healthcare providers in Ottawa face unprecedented challenges with 165,000+ orphaned patients, hospital deficits, and record wait times. Despite operating at maximum capacity with 400+ daily calls and 500 weekly patients, staff endure abuse, racial slurs, and harsh criticism. Physician burnout threatens to worsen the crisis. This commentary urges patients to show kindness and understanding, emphasizing that healthcare workers are struggling within an over-stretched system while maintaining their commitment to patient care.

KEYWORDS: Physician burnout, patient abuse, healthcare crisis, compassionate care



The Human Cost of Healthcare Crisis

I see the pain in our community every single day. I know so many of you are facing uncertainty, battling stress, and dealing with serious health concerns. Your stories reach me constantly, and they genuinely break my heart.

We're doing everything we can. But let me paint you a picture of what we're working with.

The Numbers Don't Lie

Ottawa has more than 165,000 patients without a family doctor—and that's likely a conservative estimate. Every family physician in the city receives countless requests to take on new patients daily. Meanwhile, nearly every hospital in our region is operating at a financial loss, spending more than government funding covers. This creates a cascade effect where hospitals can't meet demand, backing up every service across our healthcare network.

Wait times for all medical services have reached unprecedented lengths in Ottawa. I wish I could tell you relief is coming soon, but the reality is that things will likely deteriorate further before we see improvement.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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What I Understand vs. What I Cannot Accept

I understand your worry. I feel your stress. I recognize your uncertainty.

What I cannot understand is the cruelty.

Why must my team endure abuse? Why do patients hurl racial epithets at staff members? Why question our professionalism? Why post scathing reviews online? Do you believe these words and behaviors don't wound us deeply?

The Reality of Our Daily Operations

Our reception team fields up to 400 calls daily. Without voicemails, we have no way to return your call. Given this volume, reaching someone immediately is nearly impossible. We strive to return all calls same-day, though sometimes it extends to the next day. Our online booking system exists, but when everyone requests lengthy appointments that we cannot accom-

modate, we must prioritize and redirect—perhaps to our Nurse Practitioner, a phone consultation, text messaging, or rescheduling. We operate six days weekly, some evenings until 8 p.m., seeing nearly 500 patients per week.

The Impossible Expectations We Face

How can we treat an ear infection with the same urgency as someone in mental health crisis? How does it make sense to book a 7:30 p.m. same-day appointment, then decide it's inconvenient and visit a walk-in clinic instead, leaving us with an empty slot? How is it unreasonable to charge a no-show fee when your missed appointment prevented another patient from being seen?

When insurance companies deny claims despite our weekend hours spent on paperwork, why assume we made errors? Why can't pharmacists renew your ongoing prescriptions, eliminating your



SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- System Overwhelm:** Ottawa has 165,000+ orphaned patients with hospitals operating at structural deficits, creating cascading delays across all healthcare services.
- Operational Reality:** Family practices handle 400+ daily calls and 500+ weekly patients, requiring complex triage and extended hours while managing impossible demand.
- Staff Abuse Crisis:** Healthcare workers face daily verbal abuse, racial slurs, and online harassment, accelerating burnout and threatening to worsen patient access.
- Collaborative Solution:** Patient kindness, realistic expectations, and trust in medical advice are essential to sustaining an overstretched healthcare system.

need for urgent appointments? Didn't you notice your medication supply dwindling weeks ago? How did family doctors become responsible for solving every healthcare system failure?

NOBODY CARES MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY'S WELL-BEING THAN YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM. YOU'RE NOT A TRANSACTION TO US. YOU'RE OUR PURPOSE, OUR CALLING.

The Burnout Crisis

My colleagues and I are completely exhausted. We cannot keep skipping lunch and working past 8 p.m. We experience harsh words ten times more often than kind ones. Burnout gradually strips away our empathy and joy in this work. As more healthcare providers reach their breaking point, patient rosters will shrink, wait times will expand, and hospital crises will multiply. The situation will only worsen.

I'm fighting fiercely to protect my doctors, nurses, and staff. Your behavior is undermining these efforts.

The Path Forward: What We All Need

Here's what would help: Show kindness. Offer encouragement. Consider others' feelings. Everyone is operating at maximum capacity, working desperately to sustain an overstretched, underfunded healthcare system. We hear your struggles and genuinely want to help, but solutions aren't straightforward.

Our Commitment to You

Please trust our guidance on vaccinations, medications, weight management, prevention strategies, and healthy lifestyle choices—don't let social media become your medical advisor. Nobody cares more about you and your family's well-being than your healthcare team. You're not a transaction to us. You're our purpose, our calling.

And please, remove those hurtful online comments.



CLINICAL PEARLS

Triage Communication: When patients understand that ear infections and mental health crises require different response times, they're more likely to accept appropriate care pathways and scheduling.

Medication Management: Proactive patient self-monitoring of prescription refills and utilizing pharmacist renewal services can significantly reduce urgent appointment demands.

Burnout Prevention: Protecting healthcare staff from patient abuse is not just about workplace wellness—it's a patient safety issue that directly impacts care access and quality.