

# *Identification and symptom management of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)*

## New Clinical Practice Guidelines for ME/CFS



TOP's new Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) responds to the need for greater awareness that Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) is a complex, chronic, debilitating physical condition that can be identified and successfully managed in the primary care setting.

The CPG aims to equip clinicians with the necessary knowledge and tools to identify and provide symptom management while empowering the patient by acknowledging the legitimacy of the condition and respecting the patient's lived experience.

**Toward Optimized Practice (TOP)** is one of several key programs within the Alberta Medical Association supporting Alberta physicians. TOP works with Alberta physicians and the teams implement evidence-based practices to enhance the care of their patients <http://www.topalbertadoctors.org/home/>

To view both the CPG and summary document go to:  
<http://www.topalbertadoctors.org/cpgs/0242896>

**Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) are documents which take into account all of the published, peer reviewed medical literature and make recommendations based on that evidence.**

**Evidence based guidelines** exist in fields like treatment of heart disease where multiple large studies of the same treatment can be compared statistically. In cases where the evidence isn't conclusive many guidelines end up recommending nothing. While statistically accurate, this approach is unhelpful for clinicians who desperately need guidance while waiting for stronger evidence to accumulate.

**An evidence informed guideline** fills this gap by including expert opinion/consensus where needed. As long as this process is transparent (doesn't imply things are "proven" when they are not) evidence informed guidelines provide a valuable source of information to clinicians. This new guideline is evidence informed combining a thorough review of the literature with expert opinion derived in large part from the IACFS/ME 2014 Primer for Clinicians <http://iacfsme.org/ME-CFS-Primer-Education/News/News-Related-Docs/2014/ME-CFS-Primer-for-Clinical-Practitioners-%282014-rev.aspx>  
The Guidelines use the Canadian Consensus diagnostic criteria developed in 2003 [http://mefmaction.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=215&Itemid=26](http://mefmaction.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=215&Itemid=26)

This CPG was drafted by an expert committee of Towards Optimal Practice (TOP). I served as the content expert on the committee. We also had one scientist/researcher, one patient advocate, one psychologist and 3 family physicians on the committee. All the committee members have considerable knowledge of and experience with individuals with ME/CFS. We had access to a professional librarian to access all of the literature needed and a professional guidelines facilitator to draft the guidelines. It was a positive experience with everyone agreeing on the importance of the task and having an understanding of the unmet needs of individuals with ME/CFS. I am very proud of the guidelines.

**My hope is that these guidelines will be promoted and used across jurisdictions in Canada and abroad. All family physicians and relevant specialists in Alberta were sent an email about these guidelines. Please read these guidelines and consider lobbying for adoption in your area. If you are a patient please discuss these guidelines with your doctor. Maybe they can help him/her help you.**

For more information please contact me.

Ellie Stein MD FRCP(C)

4523 – 16 A Street SW  
Calgary, Alberta T2T 4L8  
Phone: 403 287-9941 Fax: 403 287-9958  
e-mail: [espc@eleanorsteinmd.ca](mailto:espc@eleanorsteinmd.ca)  
web: [www.eleanorsteinmd.ca](http://www.eleanorsteinmd.ca)