

February 25, 2010

A Final Message from ACFP President to Alberta Family Doctors

As the 55th ASA in Banff begins, and the Annual General Meeting for the ACFP, so does the end of my two-year presidency. Dr. Paul Humphries of Edmonton is our President-Elect and has been warming up in the batters box for the past year!

I look back on my term with satisfaction and pride – satisfaction for what has been accomplished by the Board and Executive with the tremendous support from our administrative team at the College office. Pride from the exposure and interactions I have enjoyed with my Family Physician colleagues across the province. Hearing of your challenges, success stories, innovations, and dedication to patient care validates my belief that we have a strong and vibrant Chapter representing an amazing group of Family Docs! With a voluntary membership of over 2800, we represent the largest constituency of specialty physicians in the province.

The interactions I have had with our Family Medicine residents and medical students who are already dedicated to our specialty, signals positive things in the future.

Some final thoughts –

1. The importance of the Family Doctor – old news?

I have been impressed in my dozens of formal and informal meetings with politicians, health administration leaders, our non-Family Physician specialist colleagues and the media that the message has gotten through – Family Medicine is the critical foundation of the health care system. If the foundation isn't strong – everything else falls apart. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't continue telling our story and reminding thought leaders – as I have done in a recent letter to the editor

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/health/Slicing/2591114/story.html>. Your new president has an appointment with our new Health Minister as one of his first priorities. We need to continue beating the drum, but the audience is receptive.

2. Leadership

“Leadership is the antidote for burnout”

It is a phrase that has resonated with me as I reflect on my term. I have found the presidency to be energizing and rewarding.

In my past-president role, I will be focusing on this theme and encouraging you to consider involvement in a leadership capacity. We need grass roots involvement in many areas – AHS, Section of General Practice, Section of Rural Practice, and the Alberta College of Family Physicians. A strong voice from Family Medicine will help guide the future and ensure that the perspective from Primary Care is clear and resolute. It is rewarding and meaningful - I encourage you to contact me if you are even remotely interested in having more input into Family Medicine issues.

This is a critical time for Family Medicine and your voice is needed.

3. Unfinished business

Not everything on my 'wish list' was accomplished. At the top is my conviction that Family Medicine needs a strong, meaningful alternate payment option to the current antiquated fee for service arrangement. The move towards comprehensive, longitudinal family practice with FP led multi disciplinary teams giving care to a defined patient population is the evidence-based direction of the future. To provide optimal care for our patients we need to create a 'medical home' where Family Doctors can provide care to patients. This dream can only be realized through a progressive, competitive fee schedule that rewards excellence in care and allows Family Doctors the ability to balance work and family.

While we have been at the table advocating such improvements, change has been slow. I urge you to provide your feedback to the AMA and Section of General Practice which ultimately negotiate on our behalf.

I would like to again thank the Executive, Board and staff at the Chapter Office who have supported, directed and guided my activities over the past two years. My partners at Crowfoot Village Family Practice also deserve recognition for covering my patient and clinical load while my presidential responsibilities took me away from the office. Finally, I would be remiss without also acknowledging the role my wife has played in keeping the home front stable in the past 2 years - thanks Cindy!

Good luck to Paul as he leads us in the next 2 years.

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President
Alberta College of Family Physicians