

**Present and Future Direction of Alberta College of Family Physicians  
Presented to ACFP Members  
Annual General Meeting, February 29, 2008  
by  
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As I accept the presidency of the Alberta Chapter of Family Physicians (ACFP), I would like to take a few minutes to reflect both on where Family Medicine is now in the province – and my priorities and focus over the next two years.

It is a contradictory time of both peril and promise in our profession. The challenges are well known to this group. The acceleration of expenses and business costs in larger and northern communities in the province is resulting in Family Physicians leaving uneconomic practices. Medical students are attracted to other higher profile, better remunerated specialties resulting in fewer students going into Family Medicine. All this is happening during a time of unprecedented growth in the province when hundreds of thousands of Albertans are desperately looking for a Family Doctor.

But it is also a time of great promise and hope for the profession. As we have talked with politicians, administrators and other health professionals there is awareness, endorsement and support of the evidence we have been promoting for years – Family Physicians increase the health of the community, are the natural leaders of primary care reform and provide continuity of care to Albertans. Thoughtful leaders understand the critical and central role of the Family Doctor. Primary Care Networks are providing a vehicle for creative delivery of care. For many of us, these have recharged our batteries and provided us the opportunity to give a different kind of multidisciplinary care. Finally, I am rejuvenated by the level of excitement, energy and wisdom demonstrated by medical students and residents who are interested in Family Medicine. The future looks bright.

In the context of these perils and promise, I would like to focus on three themes during my 2-year term as ACFP President.

Firstly, I believe we need to **increase the relevance** of our organization to the membership. We need to reach out to the ground level member who is working hard in his or her community, providing care for sick patients, promoting health and teaching prevention strategies, and much more – all of these activities making a measurable difference in the health of individuals and in the overall health of the community.

These busy docs are also asking what the ACFP is doing for them. In times of high patient volumes and crushing financial stress, what does the ACFP have to say or how can it help? To answer these questions, as an organization I believe we need to dialog directly with our members. To that end, the Board has just ratified a plan for a series of

meetings in communities across Alberta to reconnect with our members and take the pulse of front line Family Doctors. I plan to begin these *Members' Forums* in the spring.

Our College was based on educating our members – strength through study. We have to revisit what our role should be in CME activities within the province. Is our mandate to provide quality CME beyond what happens at the ASA? Should we be a more vocal and visual player on the planning committees of the established CME providers? Is our role to ensure quality control of accredited CME for our members? Through our regional meetings, I will be asking these questions during the spring Members' Forums. We see a growing emphasis and increasing resources targeted on quality CME offered to our members – the ACFP needs to define its role in this area.

Likewise, we need to revisit and redefine our role in Primary Care research initiatives. I am pleased to announce that the Alberta Family Practice Research Network Redesign Task Force will be holding a one day workshop, likely in June, for the purpose of seeking feedback and input from our members on the future role of the research network.

Secondly, we need to **continue the advocacy work** initiated in the last two years. The challenges and opportunities of Family Medicine still need to be discussed amongst colleagues and leaders. We have started this process already through dialogues with the Health Minister and government officials. At the ASA this week, we had formal and informal discussions with the President of the AMA and Counsel President for the CPSA. These discussions increase our mutual understanding of issues and solutions. Ultimately these connections strengthen us all.

Thirdly, it is hard for me to admit that I have become part of the 'old boys' network but everyday, when I wake up and look at my hair line, I realize I am truly there! It is clear for this organization to survive and thrive, we need to identify, nurture and support our younger members so that they can move into **leadership roles in the future**. I fear we are relying too heavily on our older, established leaders. The future is with the competent new blood in our midst. I have challenged my colleagues on the Executive to each identify at least one new member whom we can embrace into the leadership stream.

I am honoured to be leading the ACFP at this important time in our history. We have lots of new ideas and energy so - hold on to your seats for the next 2 years!

Thank you.