

A day in the life

I had a good day today. I enjoy the challenges of being president of the BC Medical Association. What crosses my desk in the president's office are issues that have strategic implications for the doctors of BC and for the association, and ultimately for our patients. There are, of course, also problems that can be difficult to solve. The range of issues that I am required to think about and act upon makes my job as your president enormously challenging and interesting, but the joy comes from the people I meet, and the colleagues and staff with whom I work.

Today, for instance, I had the opportunity to speak with the first-year students at UBC's Faculty of Medicine—all 225 of them. It was exciting to visit with these energetic, eager, and idealistic young men and women just beginning their professional journey. I was able to talk to them about my experience as a medical student at UBC nearly 30 years ago and as a family doctor, and introduce them to the BCMA and the CMA. They appreciated the visit—although on second

thought, perhaps what they appreciated was the free pizza. Well, probably a bit of both.

Tomorrow's challenge will be different—a meeting with opposition health critic, Mr David Cubberley. Primarily the meeting is simply for the two of us to be introduced, but I know we'll discuss some key issues in health care and determine our common ground, as well as recognize, and I hope respect, where we differ. I have already met with the Honourable George Abbott, our new minister of health. The meeting was open, friendly, and frank, and I believe represents a willingness for greater cooperation between the ministry and the BCMA—something which has been sadly lacking in recent years.

Then there's the omnipresent media. Speaking knowledgeably into a camera or microphone can be a humbling experience, but I'm getting a little more used to it each passing day. I expect I'll have the whole process perfected just as my term is ending.


Some days are not so good. Your Board of Directors and I were faced with

the failed GPSC (General Practice Services Committee) referendum. I, along with the Board, had endorsed and recommended the proposal to the family doctors of British Columbia. However, our members told us loud and clear that the proposals were not acceptable for a number of reasons. That is the democratic process at work and I accept the wisdom of my colleagues. Emotions ran high, but certainly focussed even more clearly the plight of family practice here in BC (which is mirrored across Canada).

Next week I will be talking to the Council of the Society of Specialists, listening to their concerns. In a couple of weeks, I will address the University Faculty Association, another group with many legitimate problems that have to be addressed. Later this year I will join BC lawyers as they debate the Chaoulli and Zelliotis decision. And in between, I will see my patients in my Kelowna office, look after them in hospital, and visit them in their nursing homes.

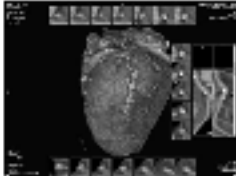
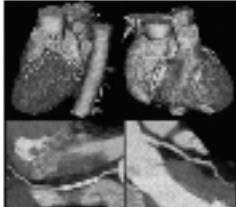
There is no single day that can be considered representative or typical in

Continued on page 418


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Continued from page 417

my role as president of the BCMA. Each day I learn something new, I see an issue from a different perspective, and I grow personally and professionally. Having such a high profile position is not for everyone, but there are opportunities for input into your organization at every level, from committees to the Board of Directors to the executive and for some of you, as president. My reason for writing this column is to encourage you to get involved, to invest as little or as much of your time as you choose in your organization. Your colleagues and your patients will benefit from your input, you will help to shape the practice of medicine in British Columbia, and you will experience personal growth as you interact with colleagues you might otherwise never have met.

—Michael Golbey, MD
BCMA President



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