

Why would anyone want to be the president of the BCMA?

At the time of this writing I am not yet your president, but will become the BCMA president on 10 June 2006. At the moment I am still living a relatively normal life, but with each passing day the smile on Dr Michael Golbey's face gets wider, and I realize that my days of calm are numbered.

Why would anyone want to be the president of this organization? Well, I can tell you why I want to do it. Quite simply: I want to make a difference. Recently, the 3-year-old son of colleagues was asked, "What do your mom and dad do?" He answered, "They help to make the people feel better."

Sadly, it has gotten much more difficult for me to help to make the people feel better in my practice, and that is true for many physicians. I can still comfort, but there are delays, shortages, lineups, and a lack of resources everywhere. I sometimes feel that I am more an apologist than a caregiver. We can go on like this—but I believe that we must not. We absolutely must not.

We now have a 6-year agreement with the government of British Columbia. We have an opportunity to forge a new and constructive relationship. We have a chance to work with them and the health authorities, and we can bring to that relationship all of our knowledge and skills. We know what our patients need: they need and deserve timely access to quality care. It is very simple. It can be done; we're just not currently doing it.

Doctors develop great communication skills in their training and their practices. We spend our days talking with and listening to our patients. We have the skills to take histories and delve into subtle communications with our patients, verbal and non-verbal, as we care for them. We need to take these very skills and hone them as we begin to work with government and health authorities. We need to change, and government needs to change—our approaches, our assumptions, and the way that we treat one another. We need to have respectful, professional rela-

tionships as we move forward.

Will it be easy? Not likely. There is a lot of history, lack of trust, and cynicism that we need to set aside. Is it worth putting our full effort into this new way of doing things? Absolutely.

It's time we got started. My patients are waiting—on waiting lists, on stretchers, at home by the phone. All of our patients are waiting, and they are counting on us.

Finally, I want to say what all BCMA presidents say, and what we all truly mean. It is a great privilege and honor to be the public face of the doctors of British Columbia. I am mindful of the many heroes of medicine that I have met in this province. I will do my best to serve you and the BCMA, and I look forward to meeting you and hearing your ideas over the next year.

—Margaret MacDiarmid, MD
BCMA President

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