

Leaving with mixed feelings

This is the last time I will write to you as the president of your professional organization. I want to say goodbye and good luck to each of you.

I am leaving with mixed feelings that are quite contrary and normally would not be allowed in the same column by the editor of this journal. Folks here at the BCMA have been very helpful with some of my mixed-up columns and you have been spared some eclectic and possibly incomprehensible Comment columns. This time I requested that the editing be light. You will notice a very personal tone which is the president unedited.

I have a sense of sadness because an item on my wish list (and most presidents' wish lists for that matter), professional unity, cannot be checked off at this time. I worry that our professional relationships have been damaged, hopefully not irrevocably, this year. I have been impressed and astounded time and again by the diversity of the doctors of BC, and perhaps the differences between us make unity more difficult. Doctors do very different things, are often on polar opposites of many debates, are passionate about many different and competing causes, and are outstandingly heterogeneous. In spite of these considerable differences, my great hope is that we can find our way to some common, patient-centred ground, and clearly demonstrate our respect for each other and for the work each of us does. Cordial relations and working together on the critical issues that we do agree on should be possible.

I am also sad because more than a few of you seem to be angry, cynical, disenfranchised, and unhappy. We are some of the most highly educated and privileged people in the world, with work that should be richly rewarding

intellectually and in many other ways. It seems to me that we should be more content than many of us are. We are each responsible for our own happiness, but I believe that a more responsive and reliable health care system would ease some of your pain. Further, I believe that the BCMA can contribute greatly to the health policy changes that we need.

Given all of the above, it may be hard to understand how I can possibly still feel optimism for the future of our profession and our association. But I really do. It is in part because of the time I have spent with medical students and residents this year. These talented, idealistic, fun members of the BCMA allow a glimpse into a possible future where many more doctors work together constructively to advocate for the health care system, and to direct their professional association. I have written and spoken many times about the tremendous untapped potential of the BCMA. It is in the members. It is in our minds and our hearts. It is about each of us taking the best part of ourselves and directing our energy and passion. It is about harnessing that drive that each of us has within us to make a difference. When that happens, we will see great outcomes. We will see professional satisfaction. We will feel joy at work. It could, should, and can happen.

I have spoken and corresponded with many of you this year. Thank you for taking the time to tell me what we are doing right, and what we are doing wrong. It has been highly educational, and I have really valued your contributions. There are hundreds of people I am grateful to, but for now, I would like to extend my thanks to the BCMA Board, committee members, and the BCMA staff. I am deeply grateful for all of the help and support I

have received personally, and for all the excellent work these individuals have done on behalf of the physicians and medical students who are our members, and on behalf of all of our patients.

I leave still believing in the value of our professional association. I have loved being the president of the BCMA and would recommend this work to anyone who has the time to devote. Bring your idealism, sense of humor, values, passion, hopes, and dreams. You must spend many more hours listening than speaking, but talking to yourself is okay. Know how to say you are sorry when you are wrong, and make sure to bring a little chocolate for people who drop by to visit. And if you decide to become president, call me any time. I will cheer you on.

With best wishes,

—Margaret MacDiarmid, MD
BCMA President



BCMA Annual General Meeting & Convention

Saturday, 23 June 2007

**Sheraton Wall Centre
1088 Burrard St**

Online registration at www.bcma.org
or by phone at 604 628-2877
Special overnight rates available
for stays at Wall Centre.
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