

## Healthy patients, happy doctors

**T**he title above, coined by our CEO Dr Mark Schonfeld, summarizes the BCMA's mission statement nicely. The BCMA has been a strong and recognized advocate for the health of patients for decades. Through our two standing committees—the Council on Health Promotion and the Council on Health Economics and Policy—numerous programs and policy papers have been developed and, more importantly, adopted by government for the benefit of patients and the professionals who take care of their health. The breadth and depth of your association's activities—such as a province-wide dementia strategy, a prescription drug policy, and the chronic disease management programs—have been very successful

and are bigger and more impressive than the activities of our sister divisions across the country. We have released two policy papers this year already. The first paper outlines the gaps in care for ADHD patients and makes recommendations for improvement, and the second paper calls for addiction to be formally recognized as a chronic disease and funded accordingly. BCMA leads the way in patient advocacy, and that is truly something all members should be proud of.

The BCMA also offers exceptional member benefits to help keep doctors happy. An example is the government-funded Physicians' Disability Insurance Plan, which was recently enhanced in a number of ways and allows some medical practice income to coincide with partial disability payments. Other recent enhancements made to round out our member plans have been the addition of identity theft coverage, a travel medical plan, and improvements to the office overhead plan. New this year is a telephone plan (office landline and cellular), offered by Telus and administered by the BCMA, thereby reducing the overall cost and resulting in big savings for members. In addition, your association has been financially prudent and unique among the provincial associations—we have had four straight years without an increase to membership dues. As well, the BCMA and government have already come to a tentative agreement on the 2010/2012 Compensation Reopener. During the current economic turmoil, that's an amazing feat. The BCMA Board unanimously recommended it be sent to the membership and, as of this writing, we await your response.

Unfortunately, no matter the amount of good work produced, organizations will always have their

detractors. As Charles Handy explains in *Understanding Organizations*, one way to establish one's identity is to exploit any differences between you and the group. So, for instance, a reputation for always asking for definitions can sometimes be exploited humorously, while others may carve a role out for themselves by constantly taking an opposing opinion. I mention this because the BCMA is certainly not immune to criticism. Although the number of members who regularly criticize are few, their views are listened to and debated at Board meetings. The BCMA is a member-driven organization. The elected Board of Directors gets its direction from the membership and develops its yearly strategic plan accordingly.

Recently the Board had the opportunity to learn from Michael Gallery, PhD, a business leader from Texas and author of *7 Measures of Success*, a book that explains the secrets of successful associations. He stressed that any successful association must strive to serve its members' needs and not be governed by those who complain. With our numerous member benefit programs, negotiation activities, and policy initiatives, the BCMA endeavors to do just that.

Ballots are going out shortly for the BCMA Board elections. I urge you to consider the slate of candidates and the issues they stand for, and cast your vote. The large number of members who decide that their vote is meaningless and do not vote in association elections means the will of the majority is replaced with the will of the minority. However, the will of the minority might not be what most members want. Please, fill out your ballot and mail it in.

—Bill Mackie, MD  
BCMA President