

Personal development and the BCMA

One doctor's experience illustrates how involvement in the BCMA led him in directions he never would have even thought of, let alone considered.

Robert Young, MD

Experience with the long-defunct Victoria Section of General Practice led to my being elected to the BCMA Board of Directors many years ago. I was certainly a novice, being shy, and politically naive. I couldn't speak in public and would break into a sweat if asked to stand in a crowd and give my phone number.

Aside from learning to be comfortable doing this, I found myself discovering how to get re-elected for 20 years during which time the following opportunities arose.

By chairing the (then new) Public Relations Committee, later renamed the Communications Committee and eventually CPAC, I could promote my original goal: the replacement of the austere BCMA logo with a new one. The idea was mine, the design someone else's. A membership contest generated awareness and allowed gentle manipulation. Hard to believe that was 30-odd years ago!

Those were the years when the Association was introducing, developing, and promoting seatbelt, bicycle helmet, and infant car seat legislation.

Dr. Young was the first recipient of the Dr David M. Bachop gold medal in 1988. He lives in Victoria.

Long-term communications director Jim Gilmore was the staff powerhouse behind these (and most other) committee projects. Bringing them to fruition required my taking part in TV, radio, and print advertising campaigns and focus groups, and leading occasional feisty presentations to the BCMA Board. These were all new worlds for me.

Projects such as MD-MLA partnerships, community meetings, president's tours, traveling to annual general meeting sites, and training sessions for out-of-town physicians (held in Vancouver) involved planning and participation. Later, chairing clandestine meetings with ministers and premiers in the bowels of Victoria's Union Club provided drama and required skill in keeping my mouth shut.

I was the author of my own fortune by virtue of another of Mr Gilmore's ideas. He wanted the BCMA to produce a weekly info/health column for the province's smaller papers. I did not think his suggested authors, none of whom were in active practice, were suitable, and offered to give it a try. I quit 1130 columns later. I learned to write, after discovering the American Medical Writers Association and using its workshop-filled annual meetings as my CME. They allowed me to visit a number of

smaller interesting cities in the US, and gave me the experience of arranging its AGM in Vancouver one year. Research for the articles provided medical CME. The columns became a labor of love.

The challenge to take over as editor of the *BCMA News* was a major one, but I learned a lot about photography, printing, publishing, and putting a paper together. My media badge allowed me to attend and report on meetings across the country. Interviewing Roger Bannister and Richard Gordon (of *Doctor in the House* fame) at Expo 86 was a cherished bonus. The late Avrill Peters, communications manager, and others, provided tremendous help with the *News*, which lasted 20 years.

There are many who have found interests and developed talents within the BCMA envelope. Just as an MD degree opens many doors, so does involvement with the Association. And an avocation can certainly make life more interesting.

While these experiences were personally gratifying, most satisfying was the opportunity to meet and know a great number of doctors throughout the province, and virtually all the movers and shakers. I have never made a list like this before, and I'm amazed at how much fun it all was.

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