

Making the most of living in unstable times

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us....” Although written to describe an earlier and much harsher time, this opening line from Charles Dickens’s masterpiece *A Tale of Two Cities* could easily describe today.

We live in unstable times, as well as times of great promise. We have economic instability on a global scale—countries such as Greece, Ireland, and Japan are faltering. Even the US, Canada’s largest trading partner and

the country that we often think of as the stalwart of the global financial community, is in trouble. The Wall

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Street debacle aside, state governments, and even Washington, DC, have been a hair’s breadth from finan-

cial disaster. Stock markets around the world abhor instability, and investors over the last few years have seen the effect in their portfolios. In BC we have had a change in political leadership with one premier retiring and his replacement developing a new vision for BC. As of this writing, British Columbians remain unsure of the fate of the HST vis-à-vis the PST/GST, even though we voted to eliminate it and revert to the original taxation method. And closer to home, we are in a difficult Physician Master Agreement negotiation with the new provincial government. A year ago, we were expecting negotiations to be all wrapped up by now.

But there are also reasons to be hopeful. Canada’s financial situation

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is on much better footing than our neighbors to the south, stock markets around the world are heading into their more prosperous season, we now know our next provincial election will be in May 2013, and quite frankly we are very fortunate to live in the best place in the world. “Beautiful British Columbia” is just that, and for the past 5 years the Economist Intelligence Unit has ranked Vancouver among the top 10 of the world’s most livable cities—ranking third in 2011.

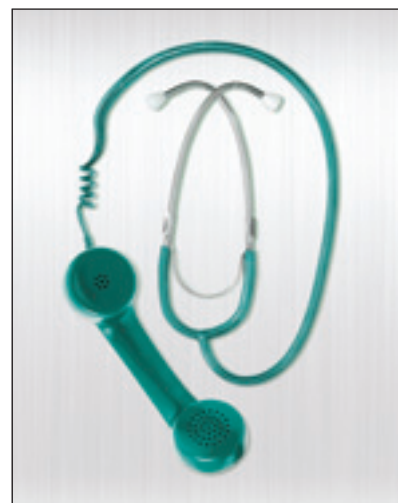
Although it can sometimes be difficult to remain focused and optimistic in the face of instability, we know from experience that physicians will endure. We also know that in times of uncertainty we will all fare much better if we remain united and cohesive. Today when we doctors feel under siege, cohesion is even more important.

There is a perception that doctors can have difficulty working with each other—that we don’t appreciate all of our different strengths and abilities.

However, we must work together—if we don’t, if we simply look out for ourselves or our particular specialty, if we lose sight of the big picture and instead focus on our own concerns, we will end up a weaker profession. In the end, we are all physicians and colleagues working toward the same goal.

We saw the value of that unity during our last round of negotiations in 2006 when we negotiated as one entity. Whether we are negotiating for a new contract, lobbying for increased access, promoting better health care, or remaining optimistic in times of uncertainty, professional unity and a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation are what will determine our ultimate success—as individuals and as physicians. The value of professional unity cannot be underestimated.

—Nasir Jetha, MD
BCMA President



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November 8, 2011: 10:15 am & 7:00 pm

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