

Looking back on a rewarding year

By the time you read this my term as your president will be nearly complete. I have been extremely proud to represent all doctors in this province—doctors who are dedicated to their patients and determined to make a difference. Your dedication was made very apparent to me as I met with hundreds of you this past year during the President's Tour.

I have had many memorable moments this past year, and signing the new Physician Master Agreement (PMA) tops the list because of its importance for doctors in this province. The creation of a facility-based physician engagement initiative will enable our colleagues to have a stronger collaborative voice in health authority decisions on budgeting, resource allocation, and physician work environments. It will allow physicians to have significant influence in the way hospitals and other facilities work and how they provide care for patients. It is the first program of its kind in Canada, and other provincial medical associations have certainly taken notice. The PMA also provides continued funding for the collaborative committees, continuing the collaborative relationships we have with government—relationships that are in contrast to some of those in other provinces.

I am also thrilled that BC physicians are leaders in the uptake of electronic medical records. Prior to the 2006 PITO initiatives, a mere 12% of physicians were using EMRs. Today more than 90% of physicians in our province are on a computerized platform, making us leaders in Canada and the world. Are our EMRs perfect? Unfortunately, no. But we now have a large population of EMR-enhanced physicians pushing the interconnectivity agenda, which will enhance

our ability to provide much-improved patient-centred, team-based care.

Many moments stand out as I think back—many of which have had a significant impact on me both personally and professionally. The President's Tour gave me the opportunity to talk with hundreds of colleagues in roughly 30 communities, ranging from urban to rural and remote.

We have a positive collaborative relationship with the Ministry of Health and our health authorities.

I learned that we share significant common concerns about relationships with health authorities, workload issues, the privileging process, and recent changes to the CMPA. As for the differences between rural and suburban/urban concerns, the former centre on ensuring clinical resources are available, having clinical backup in complex cases, and having safe and effective patient evacuation and transportation, while the latter focus on connecting with other colleagues and navigating and accessing available resources.

I also had the joy of engaging with medical students and residents on many occasions. They are an inspiring group whose energy and passion is contagious! They remind me why I entered medicine in the first place and they reignite my passion for the profession. They are also an extremely talented group of individuals who are determined to make a positive difference in the world and who aren't afraid to shake things up and do things differently if that's what it takes. They are our doctors of tomorrow, and I know the future of our profession is in good hands. I encourage you all to mix with them and to mentor them.

It takes a community to raise a medical student! What you invest today in terms of time will be returned to you tenfold.

As I step out of my role as president I'm also thinking ahead to where our profession is going. We are inundated with statistics on the rising costs of medical care—Canada's high per capita costs of care partnered with nearly the worst outcomes among OECD countries and the projected number of doctors expected to retire over the next few years. But BC is in a unique position and is dealing with these challenges better than many other provinces. We have a robust and positive collaborative relationship with the Ministry of Health and with our health authorities, and the work of the collaborative committees is already making a meaningful difference in our lives and the lives of our patients. I've also learned firsthand that our association is very, very well served by an excellent team of staff that is talented, dedicated, and visionary. Change is certainly coming. It must come! And during my term as president I have learned that BC is well prepared to meet it, participate in it, and embrace it.

My father always said, "Try to leave something better than when you found it." It's a saying that has shaped my career and my involvement with Doctors of BC, and it is what I set out to achieve during my term. Our organization achieved many significant milestones this past year, successes that couldn't have been accomplished without the hard work and dedication of all those involved. To each and every one of you, I say thank you. Together we are making a meaningful difference. We are better. Together.

—Bill Cavers, MD
Doctors of BC President