



We will prevail

Colleagues, it has been an honor to serve you as president of Doctors of BC. We have been through a lot together this past year: multiple waves of COVID-19, the most important vaccination program in BC's history, catastrophic wildfires, widespread antivaccination protests, and now record levels of burnout in the medical community. It is hard to see the people I care about suffer and toil as you have. And yet, the optimism I shared with you at the beginning of my term has not wavered. I continue to know in my heart that, no matter what happens, we will prevail. I know this because you have shown me.

I have walked among heroes in the true sense of the word. Whether you fought your battles in public, in private, on the provincial stage, or one-on-one, each of you has shown courage and strength. It is inescapable. To simply put one foot in front of the other as a health care worker during these times is a heroic act.

And yet, some acts have been so conspicuously magnanimous that I will never forget them. I remember the colleagues who wrote to me in the earliest days of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign selflessly putting others first: "Give our vaccine doses to people more vulnerable, we'll wait our turn." I remember the retired members who kept begging me to be given the opportunity to help the profession: "Get us back on the front lines so that we can contribute once more." I remember the doctors who faced public attacks, yet who refused to retaliate: "Let's seek to understand and educate rather than judge and belittle."

I have lost count of the moments of sacrifice, triumphant successes, and heartbreaking tragedies. Through it all you have demonstrated professionalism, compassion, and most importantly, humanity.

My fondest memories will be of the meetings with you, my cherished colleagues. We shared ideas, hard realities, tears, and laughter. I also treasure the exchange of thousands of emails, text messages, and social media posts. Though COVID-19 pushed us apart physically, it drew us closer together virtually. I hope I was able to bring my best self to every encounter, just as you brought your best selves to me.

I will admit that there have been low points too. Our profession is hurting in a way that it has never hurt before. We have been attacked, ridiculed, assaulted, threatened, and just plain worn down. Record numbers of our colleagues are needing and seeking help. We are paying the price for years of chronic underfunding and misallocation of resources in our health care system. In a cruel twist, we are relied upon more than ever before.

In times like this, I recall the words of Martin Luther King Jr.: "...the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." We are part of that arc because medicine remains a just and noble profession. We champion science, speak out about inequities, stand up for the vulnerable, and push back against misinformation. We are an integral part of our communities, leaders in our own right, and we are entrusted with people's very lives. Take heart that even when we are tired, even when we feel defeated, even when the loud voices of division and hate temporarily prevail, we are still part of the bending of society toward justice.

Remember, too, that we continue to have much to be grateful for. We live in a free and democratic society, one in which most people respect science and in which we have maintained a standard of living envied by many around the globe. Our society's important

institutions remain strong and resilient even in the face of many challenges. And most of all, we have each other. We have been bent, but remain unbowed. We have been tested, but maintained our integrity. We are tired, but our spirit remains strong.

To each and every one of you, thank you for the opportunity you gave me to serve. I wish for you continued wisdom, continued strength, and continued courage. We will prevail. ■

—Matthew C. Chow, MD
Doctors of BC President

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Chemotherapy drug puts young children with cancer at high risk of hearing loss

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