

CRA: Your Organization, Our Governance Structure

By Cory Baillie, MD, FRCPC

In January 2015, the CRA Board completed its governance restructuring and the goal of this article is to update the membership on these changes.

Over the last two years, the CRA Board considered governance options that would allow for the continued and increased success of the organization. To this end, the Board engaged an expert in non-profit governance, Catherine Raso, to help provide input and recommendations for the future. With our expert's guidance, it became clear that the CRA Board had become too focused on the operational aspects of the organization; this had limited the capacity of the Board to focus on where the CRA should be going in the future, rather than what we had done in the past.

The accompanying organizational chart outlines the new structure of the CRA. The most crucial change is the establishment of the new position of CRA Chief Executive Officer (CEO); the Board has hired Christine Charnock for this new position. As CEO, Christine will report to and be accountable to the Board for the operations of the CRA. Instead of reporting to the Board itself, the operational committee chairs now report to the CEO. The CEO is responsible for ensuring that the wishes of the Board, as expressed by the Board's strategic plan, are carried out by the committee chairs. Similarly, Christine is responsible for the supervision of all staff and consultants (accounting, legal, governance, etc.) hired by the CRA to help in the pursuit of its mission.

The responsibilities of the CRA Board change with the new structure. Freeing the Board from direct oversight of operations allows the Board to focus on governance. The key governance responsibilities of the Board will be:

- Member engagement,
- Development and monitoring of strategic priorities,
- Monitoring and evaluation of the CEO,
- Self-evaluation of the governance process,
- Education on the CRA organization, and

- Monitoring the external environment in which the CRA functions.

The CRA President continues to act as the Board Chair and as the spokesperson for the organization. The President will develop the agenda for the bimonthly Board meetings. The CRA President, or his/her designate, is the CRA representative to all of the various organizations with which the CRA interacts, such as The Arthritis Society (TAS), the American College of Rheumatology (ACR), the Pan-American League of Associations for Rheumatology (PANLAR), and the like.

The operational committee structure of the CRA has been updated. Most of the committees remain similar in structure; a few new committees have been created and a few others have been merged. The greatest change is that the committee chairs now report to the CEO. The CRA committee chairs will be appointed jointly by the CRA President and CEO. Moving forward, committee chairs and members will serve for a minimum two-year term. We welcome any CRA member to volunteer to serve on any one of our committees; interested parties can contact info@rheum.ca for more details.

While certainly there will be some growing pains as the CRA adapts to the new structure, the Board has complete confidence that this is a necessary and correct step for our organization to ensure the successful pursuit of our mission to represent Canadian rheumatologists and to promote the pursuit of excellence in arthritis care, education, and research.

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