

Interview with Christine Charnock, CEO of the CRA

1. What circumstances propelled you towards a career with the CRA?

Wanting to stay home with my kids.

2. Did you anticipate your career trajectory leading in this direction?

Not at all! I was working for a relief and development agency managing all of their projects in developing countries and relief situations. After I had my second daughter, I wanted to be around my family more and I did not want to travel for weeks at a time. I had a friend who was a physician and she suggested I put in my name just to do typing for specialists until I found something else; she knows I hate to be bored. Carter Thorne called me a few months later and asked if I was interested in helping him out—he was the Secretary-Treasurer of the CRA—and it just grew from there.

3. How does your professional background influence your approach to leading an organization and managing issues that arise under your leadership?

I have always worked in the not-for-profit sector, and recently completed all of the courses to get the Certified Association Executive designation. I love the challenge of change to improve things, to provide what the members need and to look beyond their perceived needs to the future.

4. How do you measure the success of the organization?

Getting positive feedback from the members, especially in terms of being able to let them know that we are



listening to them and addressing their needs.

5. Are there any untapped resources you plan to help the CRA leverage?

There must be so many—we just need to identify them and find the time to develop them! I am always searching for new ideas or thinking during talks and sessions about how something can be adapted to the needs or wants, or even unidentified needs or wants, of the CRA and our members.

6. What benefits do you think electronic and social media can

bring to Canadian healthcare that will aid patients, physicians, and healthcare providers? Will these help the CRA stay relevant? How?

I think that the future is all about people and technology and how they interact to communicate. The CRA will need to embrace this reality and figure out how it can best leverage this relationship to provide a unique benefit to our members.

7. Your tenure within the CRA is long and storied. What do you feel is your lasting legacy within the organization?

Innovation—mostly quietly, to the point where people do not really know where the ideas came from. For example, controversies: “Who shall we get to chair the meeting? How about the person who suggested it?...Who was that?... Oh, Christine.”

I love making changes to make things better, more efficient, more interesting.

8. What has been the most poignant observation you have realized over the course of your career?

To always listen to feedback; no one knows it all and it is a shame when you think you do, that you are an expert and thus cannot learn anything more.

9. What do you foresee as challenges to Canadian rheumatologists in the future? What can individual rheumatologists and the CRA do to meet these challenges?

Being averse to change, and not thinking that things will change in the future. I remember when I went back to work after I had my first daughter and they had this stupid new thing called AOL and the World Wide Web (internet) and I thought,



Christine did eventually come around to the idea of the World Wide Web...

“I am not going to learn this as I will **never** use it! Now my life is consumed by it!”

10. You are provided with a blank billboard. What do you put on it?

Zip your mouth and open your ears—you will learn so much even if you are an expert!

11. You are handed a plane ticket to anywhere in the world. Where are you going?

Tahiti—I think the glass-bottomed cabins are so beautiful!

12. What was your first paid job? How long did it last?

Delivering the *Toronto Star* newspaper at the age of seven...I did it for seven years! I have never been without a job since then.



Pillars of the CRA indeed: Dr. John Thomson, Dr. Michel Zimmer, and Christine Charnock.

13. What is your biggest pet peeve?

People not being considerate to or thinking of others!

14. What would you like to do when you retire?

Sell our house and have a cottage somewhere to come back to in the summertime, but spend the winters in Africa or Haiti, learning, helping, and living a simple life. I would like to do house exchanges all over the world and experience new communities and people.

Christine Charnock
CEO,
Canadian Rheumatology Association
Newmarket, Ontario

WELCOME TO THE RHEUM

The CRA would like to welcome the following new members:

Zainab Alabdurubalnabi,
Edmonton, AB
Samar Alharbi, Toronto, ON
Sam Aseer, Halifax, NS

Janique Dyba, Kingston, ON
Isabelle Fortin, Rimouski, QC
Maya Gerstein, Toronto, ON
Waleed Hafiz, Toronto, ON

Karlene Hagley, Toronto, ON
Mark Harrison, Vancouver, BC
Linda Hiraki, Toronto, ON
Alena Ilic, Quebec, QC

Yael Luck, Montreal, QC
Anas Makhzoum, Kingston, ON
Mohammad Refaei, Edmonton, AB
Alexander Tsoukas, Montreal, QC