

Farewell Interview with Christine Charnock, Outgoing CEO of the CRA

You have been part of the CRA for a very long time (since 1997), and many members say that for them you are the “face of the CRA.” What made you decide that the time had come to transition out of your role as CEO?

I thought that it would be a great change for the CRA and for me ... new ideas, new opportunities, new experiences ... I definitely wanted to leave on a high note when people still wanted me here. :)

Tell us about your career trajectory and about how you first got involved with the CRA.

I did graduate studies in International Development and worked in that area before I started having kids. I loved the work but didn't want to travel for a month at a time anymore when I had little ones at home. I was just looking around for something to do until I found my next opportunity and had sent my CV to Carter (Dr. Carter Thorne). He indicated that he was the Secretary-Treasurer of the organization and needed some help and it has just grown from there!



You must have had several mentors or role models throughout your career. Can you name a person(s) who has/have inspired you professionally?

There have been so many... and so many in the organization who have volunteered and have been engaged for a long, long time. The danger of mentioning any names means that I will inevitably leave someone out so I'll acknowledge them by first initial: C – making meaningful connections; M – being diplomatic but firm; J – thinking about the whole membership across the country; C – being governance-minded, not

making the coffee; J – always coming up with new ideas and creating enthusiasm; J – jumping in and being the first resident on the board and contributing that younger and fresh perspective; A – starting something new no matter your age; D – being the first female president; T – age doesn't matter, ability and commitment does; P – can be counted on to give feedback and in a very timely manner; T – fastest response time for emails; V&C – any email makes me laugh out loud; V – being very diplomatic in questioning the status quo; E – encouraging all to have a voice; C – being totally committed to a cause; E – being very pleasant, friendly, and down-to-earth; J – let's use our members' money very wisely; S – you're never too young to have a meaningful voice; M – being excited and happy makes every day a joy to you and those around you (and, nice shoes help too)!

What have been the most rewarding aspects of this job and what have been the most challenging aspects?

Connecting with people...connecting people with people, and connecting people with information! Keeping track of everything and doing the best job given limited time. And, of course, my favorite: The Annual Scientific Meeting.

Given your professional experience and success, what advice would you give to:



Christine pictured with Dr. Gunnar Kraag.



Christine with Dr. Gunnar Kraag (left) and Dr. Jamie Henderson (right).



Christine and Dr. Carter Thorne.



Christine with Dr. John Thomson (left) and Dr. Michel Zummer (right).

a) The next CEO of the CRA:

The members are what count. Without the members you don't have an organization, so always think about them first and that they are all across the country. What are their pain points, what will be their pain points in the future, and how can we help alleviate them?

b) Younger rheumatologists or rheumatologists-in-training:

Get involved and get engaged; you will meet some amazing people and make incredible life-long connections. Take the time to make the connections with others as I have seen people learn greatly from committee meetings and board meetings.

c) Seasoned members:

You can always learn something new and don't discount the value of learning from those referenced in "b" above. A fresh new perspective is sometimes the greatest learning tool.

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

I think technology is going to change the face of medicine as a whole. I did my thesis (a few years ago :)) on computer-aided medical diagnosis. IBM's "Watson" was part of it, and I thought we would be much farther than we are 27 years later!

What are your plans once you have officially left the CRA?

I am constantly looking for new opportunities but haven't decided on anything yet! It will have to involve doing new things/innovative things/creative things with a fun organization that has great people (that's something that has kept me here so long)!

What about once you retire?

Wow...retire...I have no idea when I will retire. Once upon a time I thought that I would love to go back to my former work, and go and work in emergency situations in different places around the world. We'll see if my body agrees when that time comes.

Complete this sentence:

I never anticipated that . . . I would stay here this long and that I would be given such fantastic opportunities to grow and create...

What will you miss most about the CRA?

The people!