

Reflections

By Dr. Carter Thorne, CRA President, 2012-2014

Colleagues:

The CRA will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2021, and I will have been a dues-paying member for 40 years. I had the privilege of assuming the Presidency of the CRA in 2012, which represented my third epoch with the Association. From starting practice in 1981 through 1990, like most individuals, I had little interaction with the CRA, except to pay my annual dues.

In 1990, Paul Davis assumed Presidency of the CRA and, for the first time, community rheumatologists were invited to participate on the Board. As a member of the Board from 1990 to 2004, including the Executive (as Secretary-Treasurer) from 1996 to 2004, my second epoch allowed me to experience the excitement of the "new" CRA separate from the Royal College, and now both responsive and responsible to its members. At this time, I was also instrumental in initiating the Canadian Rheumatology Research Consortium (CRRC; which I am sad to say has recently disbanded); as well as the startup of the Ontario Rheumatology Association (ORA). My most recent re-engagement with the CRA began in 2010 when I was invited to re-join the CRA executive as VP and President-elect.

In my introductory address to members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in March 2012 I identified three imperatives:

1. Improve sustainability related to industry support. All of our industry partners have embraced our new innovative model of "corporate support," moving away from simply supporting the annual meeting, which is now recognized as prescient and in compliance with evolving Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC) and Royal College guidelines.
2. Modify the governance approach of our organization and develop a more effective Secretariat. The CRA was a "maturing" organization and this evolution, initiated during my tenure and fulfilled subsequently through the efforts of my immediate successor Cory Baillie, has resulted in our current robust and responsive organization.
3. Achieve accreditor status with the Royal College. This has enhanced our branding; we are indeed recognized as the "Experts in Arthritis." Noteworthy is our enhanced relationship with the Canadian Medical Association (CMA). Also, we were one of eight Canadian professional organizations invited to participate in the launch of the Choosing Wisely Canada initiative, championed by Dr. Shirley Lake. An additional new initiative was a focus



on First Nations care through the Non-insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program.

Our annual meeting remains much in demand, with increasing attendance (1990=10 attendees; 1996=75; 2014=544; 2020=700) and not only of members and their families, but also allied health professionals, industry partners, and other interested parties.

The success of my tenure was in no small measure the result of the dedicated volunteers who preceded me, especially Paul Davis who identified the value and role of community rheumatologists in the CRA, my Executive including Cory Baillie (Vice-President), Jamie Henderson (Past-President) and Jacob Karsh (Secretary-Treasurer). Christine Charnock (whom I hired in 1997 as a part-time administrative assistant and subsequently became CRA Manager in 2012) and her dedicated team (all from Newmarket/Aurora) were instrumental in managing the ever-evolving required changes.

It was my privilege to serve you as President from 2012-2014, and I continue to participate in this vibrant organization in other roles.

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