

Reflections from the Past-President

By Carter Thorne, MD, FRCPC, FACP

Colleagues: Two years ago, I had the privilege of assuming the Presidency of the CRA, 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. As a member of the Board from 1990 to 2004 and the Executive (as Secretary-Treasurer) from 1996 to 2004, my second epoch allowed me to experience the excitement of the “new CRA.” I was instrumental in initiating the Canadian Rheumatology Research Consortium (CRR; which I am sad to say has recently disbanded; see upcoming editorial in the *Journal of Rheumatology*), as well as the startup of the Ontario Rheumatology Association (ORA). My most recent engagement with the CRA re-establishes my faith in the future of our community and our organization.

At the 2014 CRA gala dinner, we recognized over 100 members who participate actively in the CRA on committees, review panels, and as mentors. This contradicts the common refrain that organizations do not have “grassroots support.” Similar to many professional organizations, your executive and board of directors, as well as committee chairs, are a committed group of individuals who do yeoman’s service; unlike other organizations, the active support of its membership differentiates the CRA.

The CRA has had many successes in the past two years. In my introductory address to members in March 2012 I identified three imperatives:

1. Improve sustainability related to industry support. All of our industry partners have embraced our new model of “corporate support”, moving away from simply supporting the annual meeting.
2. Modify the governance approach of our organization. The CRA has had significant burdens placed upon it, and requires a new governance structure. Dr. Cory Baillie, our new President, will champion this evolution. We have enlisted an outside consultant to develop enhanced infrastructure support and support new roles for our volunteers in governance. This will go a long way to ensuring all voices of the membership are heard.

3. We have been successful at achieving accreditor status with the Royal College. This has enhanced our branding; we are indeed recognized as the “experts in arthritis.”

Noteworthy is our new enhanced relationship with Canadian Medical Association (CMA). We were one of the organizations invited to participate in the Choosing Wisely Canada initiative championed by Dr. Shirley Chow; this is an ongoing process and will be embedded in our accreditation and needs assessments. We were also invited by the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) to participate in a made-in-Canada ethics survey. Preliminary results indicate significant engagement by our membership, with twice the percentage of respondents from the CRA versus the ACR.

At this time, we are undertaking new initiatives for enhanced First Nations care through the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB), the Royal College, and the Canadian Medical Association (CMA). Additionally, we are working towards harmonization of private payers regarding consistent criteria and application procedures for medical approvals. Dr. Jane Purvis is leading a cross-Canada initiative to establish guidelines acceptable to rheumatologists, patients, and third-party payers.

Our annual meeting remains much in demand, with increasing attendance not only of members and their families but also allied health professionals, industry partners, and other interested parties.



Passing the Presidential torch.

This remains a dynamic time for all of us. I encourage your ongoing participation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the executive; Dr. Baillie; the thoughtful and considered approach of Dr. Jacob Karsh who has given us great counsel while steering us through the Canadian Revenue Agency concerns; and Dr. Jamie Henderson, who was a steady navigator and commentator on ongoing activities. I welcome Dr. Joanne Homik who is the new Vice-President of the CRA.

It goes without saying that this organization's success is led by our Secretariat, Virginia Hopkins, Sharon Brinkos, and Christine Charnock, who currently holds the title of Manager and will assume new responsibilities in leading the CRA in our new governance models.

Finally, I would like to thank all the chairs of committee, leads in various activities, and all members for their support over the past year. I look forward to a revitalized CRA, based on strong financial footings, a new governance structure, strong leadership, and an enthusiastic membership.

It has been my privilege to serve you.

Carter Thorne, MD, FRCPC, FACP

Past-President, Canadian Rheumatology Association

Past-President, Ontario Rheumatology Association

*Medical Director, The Arthritis Program & Chief Division of Rheumatology, Southlake Regional Health Centre
Newmarket, Ontario*

Photo Contest

