

# Together We Will Stand

By Philip A. Baer, MDCM, FRCPC, FACR

“I am strong when I am on your shoulders / You raise me up to more than I can be.”

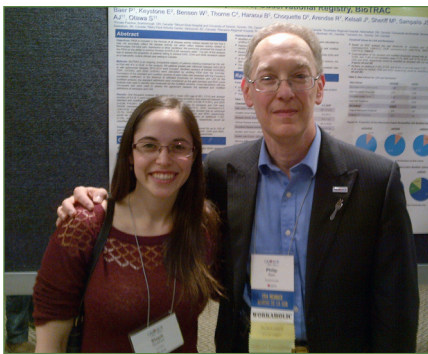
- Josh Groban, “You Raise Me Up” (lyrics by Brendan Graham), *Closer*, 2003.

The desire to pass along one’s acquired knowledge is always a strong one. Why not help others benefit from your experience, and avoid any of your mistakes? Of course, some of the best lessons are learned from making errors, and the world changes constantly, making your personal experience sometimes irrelevant to those who follow, but still the mentoring impulse is strong. “See one, do one, teach one” was the mantra during my medical training, and still carries some resonance.

I recall volunteering for very few extra activities during medical school, but I did co-edit a guide for first-year medical students traditionally put out by second year students. The edition I participated in was entitled “You Asked For It.” In my fourth year, I volunteered again as a mentor to a small group of first-year students. One of my mentees was David Williams, who went on to fame as a Canadian astronaut. I take no credit for his success, but the mentoring experience was very positive overall.

Increasing the supply of future rheumatologists is a core activity for all our Canadian rheumatology organizations, from the CRA to The Arthritis Society (TAS). Personally, I have a vested interest in this as well. With a mature busy practice, it becomes more and more difficult to absorb the patients of retiring rheumatologists in my vicinity. Patients in need are accommodated, but not always easily. In Scarborough, where I practice, the referral base is on the order of 600,000 people, currently served by one rheumatologist in his eighties, four in their fifties, and one each in their thirties and forties. The three communities immediately east of us have 300,000 more people, with only one part-time rheumatologist servicing them.

So, anything I can do to encourage future doctors to become rheumatologists, I will sign up for! For CRA ASM 2015,



Dr. Baer and Dr. Stephanie Gottheil meeting at the 2015 ASM.

I was invited, as were all Canadian rheumatologists, to mentor someone attending the meeting for the first time. I was thrilled to accept.

I am not superstitious, but I also find serendipity and coincidences to be positive omens. Thirty-five rheumatologists and prospective mentees were paired up for the inaugural program; when I received the name of my partner in this match, Dr. Stephanie Gottheil, I was pleasantly surprised to find that we already had a connection. I had attend-

ed college with her mother, and she had attended the same small school as my two sons. Small world!

The mentoring program was left quite informal. Dr. Gottheil and I met at the first plenary, and later at a poster I presented. We had a chance to discuss all the positives of a rheumatology career, which I am sure Stephanie observed for herself at our meeting, one of the most dynamic and educational ever. You can read more about it in this issue of *CRAJ*.

I also engaged in some unplanned mentoring on the flight from Toronto to Quebec City. By chance, I was seated with Liza Abraham, a second year medical student at the University of Toronto who was presenting a poster at her first CRA meeting. We struck up a conversation, and I hope it may positively influence her career choice as well. Her impressions of the CRA meeting are also highlighted in this issue of *CRAJ* (see page 23).

Mentors and mentees were surveyed after the meeting, and impressions on both sides were very positive. The mentoring program will run again at future CRA ASMs, and I highly recommend getting involved—the future of our specialty literally depends on it.

*Philip A. Baer, MDCM, FRCPC, FACR*

*Editor-in-chief, CRAJ  
Scarborough, Ontario*