Looking back and moving forward

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This month marks the 60th anniversary of the College and the 20th anniversary of the Research and Education Foundation (REF). To commemorate this anniversary, the College has undertaken several initiatives to inform members about its history (eg, a history book and a family medicine heritage website are in development). In recent months Canadian Family Physician has also shared stories about the College’s history.1,2 Recently, I read documents that were written by Victor Johnston, the first Executive Director of the College of General Practice of Canada, and discovered that the goals he outlined for an organization that focused on general practitioners echoed in the College’s ongoing mission today. While reading Johnston’s notes I also wondered if the individuals who gathered in Vancouver, BC, on June 17, 1954, imagined that the College would become what it is today, 60 years later.

College and REF snapshot

The College represents more than 30,000 family physicians across the country. It ensures that family physicians are trained and have ongoing education to meet our standards, as well as assists them in meeting the needs of their patients. As President, I have the privilege of being fully engaged in the incredible scope of the College’s activities. I have the opportunity to represent all of you when meeting with members of various health care organizations and medical faculties to discuss a variety of topics, such as the meaning of Certification, the postgraduate curriculum, physician employment, primary care research, and physician performance and revalidation. The CFPC has also been invited to discuss issues with different branches of the federal government, including the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, in November the College released a Report Card,3 grading the role of the federal government in many areas of health care, including health human resources, immunization, and support for the most vulnerable in our society.

The College has more than 140 employees supporting its work and more than 1000 members serving as committee members and representatives of the organization at the national level. When I travel to participate in meetings with provincial Chapters and I see the work that their boards and committees are involved with and learn about the activities and initiatives that Chapter representatives are engaged in, it is evident that we all share the same goal of improving the practice of family medicine so that we are delivering high-quality health care for the good of our communities.

The evolution of the REF has been remarkable over the past 20 years, and it has become an important resource for members. It has developed and sustained awards that honour our outstanding members, and supports us in conducting research that affects our practice, fosters our education, and deepens our understanding of particular aspects of family medicine. Through the REF, we can recognize future leaders in family medicine with awards maintained for students and residents.

Value of membership

As I reflect on the growth of the CFPC’s activities since the College founders had that meeting in Vancouver 60 years ago, I also consider what being a College member has meant to me on an individual level. Before becoming a member of the CFPC’s National Executive Committee in 2010, I was involved with my provincial Chapter. I have also been involved with the Certification Examination in Family Medicine on a number of levels. As Postgraduate Program Director at the University of Saskatchewan, I have had a lot of engagement with the College in the areas of curriculum, assessment, and accreditation.

The College has enabled me to connect with individuals from across the country who share my beliefs about providing patients with the care that they deserve. The College has also been my voice when the other organizations to which I belong did not seem to share the same views that I did.

I hope that the College founders would believe that their efforts to create an organization dedicated to improving the working lives of family physicians, ensuring they have opportunities to teach and conduct research—and through these efforts, improve the lives of Canadians—have been successful and that you as members share that belief. Although there is more to be done, I think the first 60 years have been a success.

References