



The benefits iceberg

Cathy MacLean MD MCISC MBA FCFP

Members often ask about the benefits of membership and what value they get for their membership dues. With revalidation occurring in most provinces, it is more important than ever to examine what the College is about and what it provides to its members. I have a bias to be sure, but I certainly think membership in the College is something to celebrate with joy and appreciation. In recent months I have been reminded, though, of the importance of understanding the value of membership in the College.

There is no need to debate the importance of continuing medical education (CME). I think we can all agree that, in today's environment, family physicians must keep up-to-date to provide the best possible care for our patients. The importance of lifelong learning is a given these days. The College is a voluntary national organization dedicated to family physician education. As such, we have been recognized as 1 of 2 options in most provinces to help physicians meet provincial revalidation requirements. We understand the rationale behind professional regulatory authorities implementing these requirements: doctors should demonstrate that they are maintaining the knowledge and skills needed to provide competent and effective patient care. The College is a leader in CME, so we can see why our maintenance of proficiency program (Mainpro) is used as the model for documenting these requirements.

Below the surface

Mainpro is not a "membership grab" or a requirement set by the College to lure in nonmembers. The costs of *tracking* CME are not what Mainpro is all about. The College has been recognized for its expertise and system of tracking for CME. It is not accurate to suggest we created the need for many to join the College or subscribe to our programs. We have merely made them available. But what does this involve?

For nonmembers participating in Mainpro it is important to be clear—Mainpro is not just a credit-tracking system. Mainpro is a *program*—a complex system of accrediting appropriate CME that is of educational value and that follows ethical guidelines to ensure quality, freedom from bias, and educational effect. It is not enough to just do CME. As a profession we must ensure that we do high-quality CME. Our time is too valuable and our commitment to excellent patient care too great to settle for anything less. What we get as members, and what nonmembers pay for when they join our Mainpro program

to meet revalidation requirements, is a high-quality CME platform—a tracking system and an educational quality assurance program. This work does not occur without an infrastructure. Expertise and knowledge, staff and service, information technology, communication strategies, and much more are required to make this system of accreditation, delivery, and tracking work. Every credit entered in the system is validated by staff. Senior staff also evaluate requests for individual consideration when appropriate—and there are more than 23000 College members.

You are paying for a *program*, and the cost of our program is competitive. We cannot, however, stop there. The National Committee on Continuing Professional Development and the Mainpro Standards Working Group meet regularly to review our accreditation standards and ensure that they reflect national and international standards for ethical conduct and educational effectiveness. Mainpro needs to be examined, evaluated, and enhanced. There is much work under way to do just this. Our goal is to continue to be leaders in this field, and with each iteration of Mainpro we strive to reach a new level of excellence. This is but one of many benefits of membership.

Membership has true value. However, like the iceberg, some looking at membership in the College see only what is at the surface and might not be aware of the many activities and programs that serve our members less visibly. There is depth to the benefits of membership, not the least of which is the enrichment of our practices and professional lives—so much more than Mainpro and yet so much in just that program alone. Check us out and let us know what is missing and how we could do better.

Benefits of membership

The following are just a few of the benefits of membership: Mainpro CME; Family Medicine Forum; the Primary Care Toolkit; family medicine interest groups; policy development; Certification and Fellowship; awards and recognition; accredited family medicine training and enhanced training programs (which means well trained future colleagues); patient education resources; family medicine librarian access and free annual searches; cutting-edge family medicine research and more research dollars for primary care research in Canada; disease surveillance; *Canadian Family Physician*; government relations; advocacy; fundraising and the Research and Education Foundation; international medical graduate training to practise in Canada; connections to provincial, national, and international organizations and government; environmental and global health work; and the list goes on ❁

Cet article se trouve aussi en français à la page 610.