



## You are welcome here

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Without question, July is my favourite month in southern Saskatchewan. The province spends much of the year sleeping and relatively silent, cloaked in white or shades of brown and gray, but for a few months it wakes up and is filled with life and sound. In the spring, you can almost see the leaves grow, and by July the fields are green, yellow, and purple and surrounded by the most amazing skies and exceptional sunsets.


For me, by far the best place in Saskatchewan in July is my cottage on a lake just outside of Regina. Over the door there is a plaque with a message for anyone who comes to stay. It begins with "You are welcome here ...." This is a message that I want to share with all the graduates of our residency programs as they start their practices and with those who are just beginning to enter their training programs.

This is an interesting time to be a family physician in Canada. During the past number of years there has been a considerable expansion in the residency spots available in family medicine across the country. Decision makers continue to see the need to ensure an adequate supply of family physicians to meet the needs of Canadians. The practice landscape is gradually shifting. As a society we have been making important decisions about how the health system functions and there has been meaningful action on these decisions. It is critical that we as family physicians engage in this work and be part of the solution for our patients and the health care system as a whole. There is a growing emphasis being placed on outcomes and accountability in the system. We collectively need to ensure that what we are doing and measuring is contributing to building a healthier

society. We also all have a responsibility to maintain our role as stewards in the health system and to balance the needs and desires of individual patients with the effects that our decisions have in the broader context.

The exponential increase in availability of information has reinforced the importance of the partnership we have with our patients as we assist them in making the best decisions about their own care. We have an important role to play in helping patients sift through all of the information available to them and in helping them understand how to best use it to improve their health and well-being. We also are increasingly able to share this role with other team members so that we and our patients can benefit from their different expertise.

As you take your initial steps on the winding road that will be your practice life, I hope that, like me, when you reflect on your career you will believe that it is rich and rewarding. Residency training and the start of practice are the first steps on the journey that spans your career and we are all constantly learning. My experience in working with my family physician colleagues is that they are a welcoming group and are generous with their knowledge and experience. Your residency should be an opportunity for you to gain the skills you need to be successful along your path. Our expertise comes with experience and ongoing education. Ask and seek answers to questions about your practice and help to answer the questions of your colleagues. An ongoing curiosity about your clinical work is an important component in maintaining your competency over the years you will be in practice.

I wish all of you the best as you start on this most excellent adventure. 

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