



A tap on the shoulder

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As a medical student, I did not have much experience with or exposure to the CFPC. As a resident, I was encouraged to participate in my first-ever College activity when I was invited to be a part of an accreditation visit. We went to Kingston, Ont, and I was blown away by all of the things that faculty, staff, and leadership do to make a family medicine residency program work. This experience was one of many that prompted a big interest for me in program administration and education standards for our specialty. Years later I joined the CFPC Residency Accreditation Committee and became a survey chair. It did not take much for me to be involved in my first College activity—I just needed one person to tap me on the shoulder.

After my residency, I was asked to join a teaching clinic. I have now been in my teaching clinic for nearly 20 years and I love teaching and working with residents and students. Because of a fabulous team around me, I became the residency program director and I had the privilege of working with other program directors across Canada because of committees supported by the CFPC. The friendships and bonds that I have made with family physicians and administrators who run training programs across the country have been incredibly meaningful. Being able to share ideas, vent frustrations, and commiserate with fellow directors made the sometimes-challenging job easier to do. I think it made me a better leader and provided me with a sense of community. Getting to network and reconnect is one of the main reasons I love going to Family Medicine Forum each year, as I was pleased to do last month.

I continue my journey with an organization that exists in part because of a cohort of family physician volunteers who chair and participate in committees, sections, Chapters, and the board. Volunteers who want to be able to say to our members—to you—we have your back; we want to hear you; we want to advocate for change and to improve how we work together to care for our communities, how we care for each other, and how we are recognized for our contributions to the health care system: reducing costs, improving outcomes, and saving lives.

Some of the many things that we at the College are working on are exciting to me! Pushing further to protect

the terms *family doctor* and *family medicine*; promoting physician wellness and healthy working environments; and improving how we meet our calls to action for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada across the different levels in health professions, education, and medical care.

In particular, physician wellness is close to my heart. In my other role as Vice-Dean of Education for the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, I observe hits to physician well-being on a regular basis. I am a part of networks on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms that were created in part because many physician-based organizations are not nimble enough to respond to our needs. These amazing groups support hundreds of physicians who are burned out and seeking change, and who are worried about the profession they chose and looking for someone they can relate to and learn from. These communities are available any time of day—willing to be an ear and a shoulder. We have much to learn from these groups and how they create safe spaces for those who need them. Many of the physicians who are engaging on these platforms are leaders in their own right—the best conversations for me to witness are those that express pride in the family medicine specialty, and they remind us why we do what we do.

I am happy that I was tapped on the shoulder a number of times throughout my career to become involved in our organization and to engage with other family physicians. I am glad I was supported to be able to volunteer for committee work, teach in my clinic, and be invited to social network groups. I am also pleased to see family physicians in their local settings being involved in their communities, engaging in advocacy work, and connecting with colleagues remotely who need a supportive ear. I think this work contributes to the diversity of activities that we do day to day. I know for me it improves my well-being as a clinician and administrator.

If you are already involved in these sort of activities, tap a junior colleague to join you. If you are interested in volunteering for an organization, writing a blog, joining a group, or supporting your community, I encourage you to take that step. ❁

Cet article se trouve aussi en français à la page 934.