



Everyday miracles require bold action

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Since the announcement in May 2022 naming me the new Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the CFPC, there has been no shortage of moments that have reminded me of the honour of assuming this role. To work with all of you in advancing family medicine in Canada—our members, our board, our CFPC leadership, and our partners—is a privilege beyond compare. My preparatory conversations throughout the summer have yet again reminded me of Canada's good fortune to have a storied generalist tradition as the foundation of our health care system.

It has not escaped my notice, however, that I am also joining the CFPC amid a growing crisis. Myriad factors, including remuneration that has not kept pace over decades, an aging population with more complex health care needs, and a lack of support for physician well-being, have made practising family medicine more demanding and less satisfying. The fatigue and frustration that this has fomented have only been accelerated over the 2 years of disruption owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As much as vigilance is necessary to safeguard freedom, to paraphrase the well-worn saying, the same can be said about family medicine in Canada. It is not enough to rest on our laurels and our history. Instead, we must constantly be committed to taking action and collectively protecting the invaluable role that primary care plays in the Canadian health care landscape.

Being dual trained and coming from the field of public health, I know that family doctors share similar challenges in being duly recognized for the amazing work that they do. It has become altogether too easy for many to take the dedication of family physicians for granted, doubly so as family doctors often respond to challenges by simply pulling up their bootstraps and continuing to perform everyday miracles that help patients live longer and healthier and access care when they need it.

To me, this status quo is untenable; doing more with less cannot continue to be the overarching approach to the primary care system led by family doctors. In the wake of the pandemic, it is more important than ever for Canadians to reaffirm their commitment to family medicine and take steps to preserve and strengthen the critical role that a strong primary care system plays in underpinning health care in our country.

To that point, we already know what needs to change, and what will make lives better—not only for physicians but also, most especially, for the patients who rely on our care. Now is the time to take bold steps to invest in family medicine for the future, through supporting and streamlining practices, providing fair remuneration and necessary support, and improving alignment between primary care in the community and in the acute care system.

Futureproofing family medicine through committed investment is the best way to ensure that the specialty continues to draw the best and brightest of our newest generation. It will also ensure that our patients will continue to enjoy the unparalleled benefits that arise from a defined doctor-patient relationship within a comprehensive, multidisciplinary primary care practice.

In many ways, we are past the point of defining the problem; now is the time to start the hard work of building. This will require policy makers and the public to commit to a clear vision of what family medicine will look like in the future and to fund action plans and timelines with clear and tangible goals.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Besides picking up the pieces in the wake of the pandemic, our communities are more divided than ever. Many of us are burnt out, perhaps harbouring resentment, and generally exhausted from the toll exacted by the precipitous decline in goodwill and kindness in our day-to-day jobs.

Moments like these may create a sense of despair—but they also represent a more important opportunity for togetherness in knowing that we are not alone and in service of the greater cause.

I recognize that we may not all fully agree on what needs to be done or where we need to go. What I can commit to, however, is working with our board to bring the full resources of the CFPC to reality by listening to your needs and ideas and by pushing for decision makers to take concrete actions and build the family medicine system for the future.

I am sure we can all agree on 1 thing: while the best time to advance and optimize the field of family medicine was perhaps some time ago, the next best time is now.

In that vein, I look forward to sharing my thoughts on our progress in future Charting Our Course articles in *Canadian Family Physician*. I also hope to hear from you as we continue on this journey together. Please feel free to reach out to me at executive@cfpc.ca.



Cet article se trouve aussi en français à la page 785.

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