



Family medicine matters

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In March I celebrated 6 months in my role at the helm of the CFPC. At this milestone I can confidently say that it has been a great privilege to bring my leadership experience and approach to tackling the challenges faced by our members and our specialty. From our dedicated board, executive team, staff, and volunteers and from the family doctors across the country who have offered their wisdom and support, reminders of what makes family medicine special come to me every day.

Many of you have kindly expressed appreciation for my public health leadership, particularly during early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. But you might not know that my passion for family medicine is far more personal: my wife is a full-service family doctor, and I began my career practising comprehensive family medicine in an underserved community in Brampton, Ont.

For the better part of a year, before I returned to public health specialty training, I saw all comers in my clinic and worked closely with inspirational family physicians who showed me the ropes. I also grew familiar with the burdens of day-to-day practice—the administrative load, the uncompensated work, and the system challenges and failures that brought moral injury whenever I could see that a patient was slipping through the cracks.

Despite those challenges, my time in family practice is something I have always cherished—especially in a diverse community where the care being provided mattered and made a difference. I fondly remember many patients, including one who graciously gave me consent to publish a case report based on his story in *Canadian Family Physician*.¹

Even as my career path veered toward public health, I maintained a connection to primary care for almost a decade, doing locum work and covering urgent care shifts whenever I could. I loved the opportunity to pitch in on the front lines, to witness on the ground not only the challenges being faced by patients in the communities that I served, but also the everyday miracles my colleagues were still quietly performing despite their ever growing practice burdens.

The desire to maintain that connection to family medicine also manifested in my continued contributions to the College. I saw the value that collective organization provides in supporting all of us as family doctors and was proud to maintain my full membership in the

CFPC as I progressed through my early career in medical leadership on the public health side.

I was also keen to serve the specialty where I could. One point of pride and enjoyment I have comes from having volunteered to support the examination process as a simulated office oral examiner and assistant coordinator through a dozen sittings. I have been told in my current role that this participation is, regrettably, no longer an option for me, but helping with examinations kept me connected to family medicine colleagues and gave me unforgettable professional experiences.

Other ways that I have enjoyed supporting the College through the years include publishing and responding to articles in *Canadian Family Physician* and participating in and presenting at Family Medicine Forum. I also have a long-standing connection to the Besroure Centre for Global Family Medicine, as I was one of its inaugural research fellows—supported by a grant from the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine.

It has been especially poignant coming into this role after having engaged for so long with the CFPC, because I have now seen first-hand how much work goes into providing these offerings to members. College staff work tirelessly to support our members—to translate research findings into advocacy for better practice conditions and support, to ensure that rigorous standards continue to back our credentials, and to bring family doctors together to defend and advance our specialty while finding solutions to the pressing problems of our time. I am confident this work will drive changes that support our members and, ultimately, the health of everyone in Canada.

Having straddled the worlds of family medicine and public health in my practice career, I am always reminded that these specialties share an underlying truth: we are all connected, and we are stronger together. Over the next 6 months, as we embark on a new strategic planning process for the College, I am encouraging all our members to come together, to engage with us, and to deliver with our collective voice this message: family medicine matters. 🌸

Acknowledgment

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Reference

1. Loh LC, Rao RV, Ng D. Uncommon, sinister vertebral fracture. Early-onset multiple myeloma. *Can Fam Physician* 2013;59:1195-9.

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