



Dr. Jack Cottrell

Defining the Value of Membership

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During my time as CDA president I have had the privilege of attending meetings of various provincial and local dental associations across the country. These functions enable me to meet face to face with dentists and allow me to ask for their opinions on CDA's activities. These conversations overwhelmingly bring positive feedback and remind me what an honour it is to represent my fellow practitioners. However, some dentists have asked me what exactly they receive in return for their CDA membership dollar.

While this is a valid question, it does not have a simple answer. A dentist in one province may value CDA for its advocacy efforts with the federal government. Another dentist might be looking for more tangible benefits that are useful on a day-to-day basis.

When I answer this question, I try to emphasize the enormous range of services that CDA provides to members. I sometimes use the analogy that CDA supports its members with 4 pillars of service: national advocacy, representation at the global level, information and clinical support, and member benefits.

As the national, collective voice of Canadian dentists, CDA makes sure that the federal government knows dentistry's perspective on clinical and political issues, which run the gamut from access to dental care to the importance of dental research and education. Being a national association places unique demands on CDA. We often function in a coordinating or facilitating capacity, seeking consensus among provincial dental associations on matters that are important for all Canadian dentists. This cohesion is achieved by providing the appropriate forums where different dental organizations can come together to discuss issues and propose solutions.

Representing the interests of all Canadian dentists extends beyond our national borders. CDA maintains a close reciprocal relationship with the American Dental Association. Our involvement with the FDI World Dental Federation and the ISO technical committee for dentistry allows CDA to provide input into FDI position statements and to play a key role in international dental standards. While much of this global-level work takes place behind the scenes, it is crucial to the advancement of the profession in Canada.

CDA offers its members support in the form of information services and clinical practice resources. Dentists and dental office staff are made aware of the latest developments in clinical, political and practice management matters through *JCDA*, *CDAAlert* e-mail bulletins, *Editors' Choice* selections and the CDA website. CDA's Resource Centre offers a range of information services that are relevant to the research or practice management needs of members. CDA also offers its support to dental academia and the dental regulatory authorities in Canada.

Finally, CDA's member benefits are always reviewed and refined to ensure they meet the demands of the modern practitioner. For instance, while CDA continues to provide support to CDAnet users on a daily basis, we are now championing the evolution of electronic dental claims transmission technology by offering the eQualifiD digital certificate for ITRANS as part of CDA membership.

More recently, 2 new member services were introduced: the Lexi-Drugs and Lexi-Natural Products drug databases and the Member Savings Centre (MSC). The latter provides CDA members with online access to special discounts on many products and services from well-known suppliers like Microsoft and Grand & Toy.

This 4-pillar analogy merely scratches the surface of the wealth of activities that CDA is either involved with, organizes or administers. Whether it is providing a discount on your next purchase of office supplies or lobbying the federal government on GST legislation, CDA always works with its members' best interest at heart. CDA truly offers a level of service that is first class. So is membership in CDA strong value for your dollar? It's worth every cent.

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