



Dr. Wayne Halstrom

A Climate of Cooperation and Collaboration

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Words are such playthings! We fashion words around feelings, circumstances and agendas. Last year, Dr. Jack Cottrell fashioned his tenure as CDA president around the word “connected,” as in we are all connected within our profession and must work together to achieve desired outcomes. This year, I am taking his theme one step further and would like to add 2 more “C” words — cooperation and collaboration.

Associations share one fundamental goal: we are all here to serve our members. Whether it is the Prince George Dental Society and Association, the Dental Association of Prince Edward Island or the Canadian Dental Association, we all have a common desire to meet the needs and wants of our members. To maximize the outcomes that we seek on behalf of our members, it is essential that all levels of organized dentistry operate within a framework characterized by cooperation and collaboration. If we fail to keep these 2 ideals in mind, we may find another “C” word creeping in — conflict. There is no room for conflict in our profession.

Another common goal held by associations is to provide benefits for its members. It is simply not enough for collegiality alone to be the primary reason for belonging. Yet in pursuing value for members, we can sometimes stumble across each other. For instance, most associations seek sponsorship for various events and activities. Similarly, as we respond to media requests, there can be differences of opinion as to which jurisdiction should prevail. These are but 2 examples of arenas where there is potential for conflict in the absence of collaboration and cooperation.

Happily I am able to report to you that cooperation and collaboration are alive and well within the dental community in Canada. Inter-jurisdictional issues can be negated by fostering strong working relationships with our colleagues. Along these lines, CDA has established a task

force to examine the current state of relations between CDA and its corporate members. The task force will use a consensus approach to come up with recommendations that allow all associations to achieve member satisfaction.

Collaboration and cooperation also apply beyond our borders. CDA meets with representatives of the American Dental Association throughout the year, which brings our 2 worlds together. Both parties recognize that actions on one side of the border can have an effect on the other. We have a history of engaging with our American colleagues on issues involved with accreditation. This relationship is unique; there is no other nation with which we share such a common bond that allows reciprocal recognition of credentials. This accomplishment was achieved only through collaboration and cooperation.

Our relationships extend beyond the American border. In the past few years CDA has made steps to establish a relationship with the Mexican Dental Association. When one considers that there are some 190,000 dentists in Brazil, the sheer scale of the profession around the world becomes apparent.

The profession's global nature will be reinforced in 2007 when CDA past president Dr. Burton Conrod becomes the first Canadian president of the FDI World Dental Federation. Having attended an FDI General Assembly, I am aware of the significance of this body to Canada. The Assembly functions much like the United Nations, where member countries small and large are able to express their oral health concerns and needs. The Assembly also approves FDI position statements, the effect of which can be felt around the globe. If one nation brings an issue to the fore that is cogent to their own situation but which, if adopted on the world stage, would have serious repercussions in other jurisdictions, we must remain involved and vigilant.

Our membership in FDI and the relationships that we have been able to establish are indicative of the collaboration and cooperation required to maintain a healthy and vibrant profession at home. We should always seek ways to work together for the benefit of our patients and our profession.

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