

President's Column

FACE TO FACE



Dr. Burton Conrod

I am an enthusiastic proponent of electronic communication. It can be highly effective and efficient, delivering current information in a timely fashion. At CDA, we are always looking for ways to communicate with our members that better meet their need for up-to-date and in-depth information. Strict publishing deadlines and the prohibitive cost of frequently publishing print material mean that we must increasingly turn to electronic solutions to our communications problems.

Presently, we have e-mail addresses for just over one-third of our membership. Recently we put these addresses to good use when members were given a heads-up about an article to be published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* regarding the rights of HIV-infected dentists and their patients. Because we have fax numbers

for 75% of our members, many received the information via this means.

Besides the speed of transmission, another advantage of e-mail communication is that members can retrieve the information at their convenience and easily store it for future reference. Paper publications may be misplaced or discarded by the time a dentist realizes the information is of importance. The electronic version of this journal (*eJCDA*) is gaining popularity because of the convenience of looking through back issues and retrieving full-text versions of articles that only appear in abridged format in the print version.

I have often thought how convenient it would be to send out President's Letters if we had an e-mail address for every member. I hope this will soon be a reality. The cost of sending these letters by snail mail means that they are reserved for only the most important topics and budgetary constraints are always a major consideration. I urge you to send your e-mail address to reception@cda-adc.ca to help us serve you better.

Regardless of our progress in the field of electronic communication, I truly appreciate the advantages of face-to-face meetings with members and stakeholders. Early in my term, I became aware that no matter how many vehicles we use to convey some information, the message is only received when delivered in person. Much of the cost of running our association is related to enabling executive council members and staff to meet with groups of dentists all across the country. When it comes to communicating the need for change in an organization, face-to-face meetings are particularly important to build trust and to impart the sense of urgency associated with it.

Organizations don't develop relationships — people do. It is absolutely critical for CDA officials to meet on a regular basis with groups ranging from

the National Dental Examining Board and the Academy of General Dentistry to the provincial dental associations and colleges. We cannot rely on the Internet to gain insight into the real needs of our professional colleagues and advocate our positions to other organizations.

Face-to-face communication has been described as a ballet of auditory and visual interaction — where body language is just as important as the spoken word. Dentists are well versed in personal communication and our volunteers are most effective when interacting with members. Please take every opportunity at local, provincial and national meetings to meet your team at CDA. Your input will ensure that CDA continues to evolve as a responsive, relevant organization.

Wherever I have travelled this year, I have been well received by members who look to CDA for leadership in oral health care and by various stakeholder groups who influence the environment in which we provide that care. I have fond memories of so many people working together to advance our profession in the interests of our patients. As I focus more of my energy on patient care once again this fall, I am very cognizant that dentistry is not merely a business or a trade — it is a self-regulated profession made up of ethical and dedicated people who try their best to do what is right for their patients and profession. I have witnessed this personal commitment by practitioners from coast-to-coast who work passionately to improve the oral health of Canadians. I have enjoyed meeting you face-to-face.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to lead CDA this year. It was indeed an honour.

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