

President's Column

CDA'S WORK BENEFITS NON-MEMBERS TOO



Dr. Alfred Dean

I am proud and happy to occupy my new position as president of CDA. It is a great honour for me, as this is an achievement shared by only 84 other individuals since CDA was founded back in 1902. Be assured that I do not take this responsibility lightly.

Through CDA, we have accomplished many things. Every day, your national dental association is dealing with “stuff.” It could be big “stuff” like the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)* or it could be more mundane “stuff,” like the standard dental claim form. But I ask you — *who else is going to do it for you?* As I speak to dentists and dental groups across this country, I hear one recurring theme. How do we get all Canadian dentists to see the importance of CDA's work and to support their member service organizations? The work we do benefits both

members and non-members, and yet many dentists continue to take advantage of these benefits without providing any support to CDA. The following “letter” is a composite of feelings I hear expressed by concerned supporters of organized dentistry. I have written my first column in this manner so you will know that these are widespread concerns.

Dear Dr Dean,

I feel that I must get something off my chest. I understand there are 7,600 non-member dentists who feel it is unnecessary to support the good work that CDA does on behalf of the profession. How can this be?

Dentistry has a rich history as a caring profession, one that has earned its self-regulating status. While I am no historian, it occurs to me that no single individual accomplished this on his own; nor can any one individual maintain this on her own.

All dental schools in this country maintain their high standards because they submit their programs to the rigorous adjudication of the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, a body that grew out of CDA. Do these dentists believe that these high educational standards just evolved out of thin air?

We practitioners use guidelines every day to bring world-class care to our patients. These guidelines include, but are not limited to, infection control and waste management. They could have been left to the regulators to craft on their own. As an arm of government, regulators certainly have the mandate to impose these things. Thankfully, we had a strong national association that could draw advice from all regions of the country and create guidelines with the regulators that fulfilled our need to protect patients while being user-friendly.

Dr. Dean, it cannot be possible that these dentists believe everything they can lay claim to just appeared unbidden from the ether, including their ability to earn above-average incomes. (Does anyone remember the Uniform System of Coding & List of Services created by CDA and used by all Canadian dentists when helping their patients deal with insurance carriers?) Don't even get me started on the work that organized dentistry has done to keep U.S.-style insurance programs out of Canada.

Maybe some dentists have become complacent. Please tell me it isn't so. Regardless of the reason, the end result will be the same — loss of our status in Canadian society. It is the professional responsibility of all non-member dentists to support organizations dedicated to improving the professional environment of practitioners and the oral health of Canadians.

Dr. Dean, thank you so much for allowing me to take some of your time. I want you to know that I for one appreciate the great work that CDA does on our behalf.

Sincerely,

A Frustrated CDA Member

The “letter writer” is correct. Organized dentistry is responsible for all of those good things and many more. One of our greatest recent achievements is the work that CDA's editor-in-chief Dr. John O'Keefe has done to encourage input from you and to improve our ability to get information out to our members. Read his editorial and learn more.

I love this profession and I want to see it thrive. We need your help. Please help us.

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