



Dr. Don Friedlander

## Building a Strong Profession

Under CDA's new strategic action plan, 3 priorities help guide the activities of the Association — a strong profession, a united community and a healthy public. This month and in my next 2 installments, I will discuss the goals and initiatives of each of these strategic priority areas, beginning with a strong profession.

One definition of profession is “a vocation founded upon specialized educational training, the purpose of which is to provide disinterested counsel and service to others, for a direct and definite compensation, wholly apart from expectation of other business gain.” Although we may not always take the time to consider the definition of profession, we are all aware of the positive impact the dental profession has on the health and well-being of the public. It is therefore important to take measures to ensure that our profession remains in a strong position, to care for the oral health of Canadians.

To achieve this goal, the CDA Board of Directors has created a ‘Strong Profession’ priority team, with the objective of analyzing the state of the dental profession and identifying the key current and future challenges we face. The team will propose strategies and actions that CDA can take to address these issues.

One of the team's high priority strategies is to coordinate a national awareness campaign to promote dentistry, dentists and oral health. The profession of dentistry, like other types of business, industry or professions, needs to develop a strong brand and favourable impression in the minds of our patients and stakeholders.

To maximize the resources of CDA and our partner provincial associations, a strategic approach to this branding initiative will be employed. This branding program will include an integrated marketing communication plan to promote awareness among our designated target

audience. The reputation of dentistry will be enhanced by demonstrating the value that the profession delivers in improving the lives of our patients.

Another ongoing strategy to foster a strong profession is leveraging CDA's advocacy capacities to enhance the profession's relationships with government decision makers and opinion leaders. This involves monitoring proposed legislative and regulatory changes, informing our partners and coordinating the discussions necessary to harmonize policy development and advocacy. While CDA has focused on promoting seniors' oral health as our priority issue in our lobbying activities over the past year, we also deliver messages to decision makers on the funding of dental care and oral health research, product regulation, tobacco control, First Nations' oral health and competition in dentistry.

Additionally, having effective and collaborative professional associations is an important component of a strong profession, as it enables Canadian dentistry to communicate with a unified voice. Such cooperation allows us to have a greater impact on the advancement of the profession through the promotion of oral health with government, media and the public, highlighting the vital role of dentists in society.

And as the profession is founded on specialized educational training, the team has also identified that to further advance the profession we must support the scientific and academic foundation of dental practice and contribute to the expansion of this body of knowledge.

Finally, one of the privileges we enjoy as dental professionals is work autonomy. To maintain a strong profession, we must be diligent in preserving our relatively high degree of control over the work that we do, while reinforcing our leadership role in oral health diagnosis and the delivery of oral health services to our patients.

Dentists are recognized as experts in oral health in Canada, and through our education, diagnosis and treatment skills, we deliver an essential health service to our patients. We have earned the respect and appreciation of our patients through our dedication to the profession and the public we serve. But we must never take this position for granted. Only by building a strong profession through our leadership role in oral health care, and serving the public interest through knowledge and advocacy, can we remain in control of our future.

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