



President's message. Growing like a weed

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**Société de la médecine
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Our Society of Rural Physicians of Canada is only 14 years old. Realistically speaking, it is just reaching puberty — the age of my teenage son, Robert. Like Robert, we are growing like a weed, with the youth of our organization providing us with a sense of adventure, vibrancy and resiliency. Our membership has increased fifty-fold, from 40 to over 2000, and it continues to grow stronger every day. We are looking forward to a great future.

The strength of the SRPC lies in its members, down-to-earth rural docs, keen residents and enthusiastic medical students. Many have been great champions and ambassadors for enhancing rural health. Our voice for better health care for our rural communities is getting greater attention. We have increasing linkages with other national organizations that have collaborated with our society to improve our ability to look after the health of rural Canadians.

We have more residents than ever choosing family residency programs with rural content. An increasing number of medical students are looking at rural practice as a career choice. We have active resident and medical student committees within the SRPC who are showing great passion for rural medicine. Currently, our focus is on family medicine career paths as a route to rural practice. Hopefully we will instill the desire of other primary specialties such as general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, internal medicine, anesthesia and psychiatry to “go rural.”

This can only occur with affirmative action for admission of students with rural backgrounds to medical schools, and rural placements during training both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. We have a number of non-family medicine specialists who are members of our Society and who require the SRPC's support in advancing their struggle to enhance rural practice.

This year the SRPC had the privilege to honour Dr. Carl Whiteside with the Rural Leadership Award. Carl has been a key player in making the rural family medicine stream a big component of the training program at the University of British Columbia. He has promoted our Rural and Remote Medicine Conference to his residents and students and has encouraged them, in more ways than one, to attend our annual conference. He has made rural practice a desirable career choice for many of his students and residents.

The SRPC's approach to professional development is one that many rural physicians, residents and students can identify with as being more in line with what they need to know in rural practice. Our Rural and Remote Medicine Conferences draw progressively more registrants. In Winnipeg this April we had almost 400 participants, a far cry from the 40 who met in a downtown Montréal hotel 14 years ago. We will continue to enhance the content of our Rural and Remote Medicine Conference and work to develop our rural critical care modules into a complete package.