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President's Message. Summer 2020 – Traversing uncertainty

It is my honour to become the president of the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (SRPC). I am grateful for the confidence placed in me by the Society's membership as we traverse this uncertain time.

The value of rural generalism shined during the lead up and response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Our members displayed their ingenuity, academic prowess, and most of all, their tremendous support for colleagues and communities across the country. During the early days of the pandemic, the RuralMed listserv was a constant source of up-to-date knowledge on COVID-19 and provided a creative and solution-focused platform for helping many of us navigate this new threat.

Even where we were well prepared, the pandemic laid bare many gaps in rural health care. Rural, remote, and northern communities continue to have limited emergency transport options, inequitable access to tertiary care, a dearth of equipment and populations with a high burden of comorbidity. These are longstanding challenges, made all the more urgent by the surge.

I was impressed, though not surprised, by the clinical courage I

witnessed from friends and colleagues who faced these challenges together. As community leaders, rural physicians stepped up to provide care outside of their comfort zone and showed leadership and commitment to ensuring the best outcomes possible.

As in clinics and hospitals, the pandemic also had a big impact on the SRPC as an organisation. In March, the executive and conference organisers made the difficult decision to cancel this year's Rural and Remote Medicine Conference. I want to thank the conference organising committee and staff who put so much work into this year's event. Although we have faced some setbacks, the financial and administrative strength we have gained over the past several years will help carry us through our next conference in 2021!

Rural generalism is well suited to the unsettled nature of the world. We cannot predict the future, but it will likely be difficult and require a lot from us all. As a group, SRPC members deal well with this type of uncertainty, and we are well poised to help our communities endure and thrive in whatever may come.

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