

This has been a hectic start to the year.

We started with our welcome meeting in January where we also attended the College of Dentistry white coat ceremony. Jerod and I followed that up with the CEO symposium. It is an educational conference that goes through the workings of a board. I find this information useful in performing our duties as the CDSS council. I expect that we will send Drs Louie and Hilary in 2018.

Then we moved into provincial budget season. It brought a few things to light. Our provincial government is desperate. They are going to tax everything, including dental premiums. This took us by surprise. But it also shows they don't even consider consultation with the different member groups of dentistry. We need to have a voice that is heard. We would still recommend a chief dental officer. This would be our lead into government. It would also be a position of consultation for the government in regards to dentistry.

The challenge coming up in the near future is negotiating. They are desperate. The divisions that we talk to in regards to our dental programs have strict instructions to cut expenses by 3.5%.

While I don't expect them to budge on that number, we may get a chance at some concessions. The chief dental officer is a possible ask. If you can do some brainstorming in regards to other items we can ask the government for that is nonmonetary, we may be able to get some leverage to achieve these type of items that would aid dentistry in the future.

We receive notice that the Saskatchewan hygiene association wants to increase their scope of practice in order to improve access to care. Now, often I try to stay positive, but as many of you read in the email responses I made I just can't support it. We can discuss this as part of other business if we want to develop a thought out policy or response to their proposal.

Jerod, Dr. Bernie, Dr. Louie and I attended the CDA AGM in Ottawa in mid April. There were no amazing decisions made but some interesting points made in the variety of meetings held.

There was a discussion on access to care, primarily for native populations. While there is a need, dentistry cannot impose our wishes on them. While we would like to improve dental health in these locations, the reserves have multiple issues of more significance than dental care. Clean drinking water is probably the most notorious. CDA will research how dentistry can help these peoples so that we are not imposing but aiding their efforts with a net effect that will also benefit their dental health.

There was a discussion on sugar reduction. This was a heated topic as many individuals felt we needed to increase our efforts. The challenge is determining what is appropriate and are we the appropriate group to lead the charge on this topic. There is consensus on the importance of sugar reduction but there are many directions to attempt to impact sugar consumption. The CDA feels it must determine the most effective approach that will cause the desired affect. We were reminded that although an organization can have a large circle of interest, it's circle of influence is much smaller. We need to make a difference where we can.

Another topic was narcotic abuse. Most dentists are aware that there are significant abuses in regards to prescription painkillers. There was a study that showed dentist prescribed drugs account for 30-40% of abused drugs. This was surprising. It shows me we should review our narcotic prescribing guidelines in Saskatchewan.

There was another topic that was not new for the representatives from Saskatchewan. There are some groups in Canada that want to develop pgy1 programs so that they can require a pgy1 position prior to licensure as a full practicing member. We have already heard the research behind this as part of Dr. Uswak's 3+1 program that was proposed for the College of Dentistry.

This frustrates me whenever I think about it. Our university could have been a leader in Canada and the rest of the world by developing a program that is exactly what people are looking for in many different jurisdictions.

We need to develop a policy in regards to members who have not completed their consent to conditions with a subheading that would address CDSS representatives.

As much as I am the president, I do not expect people to automatically agree with the points I have made here. I would love some knowledgeable involved discussion about the topics I have mentioned here, and any others that peak council member interest.

Mike Prestie