

CARO President's Message for January 2010



With the holiday season now past, I hope that all of you are looking forward to an incredible and productive New Year (and new decade)! Reflecting back, CARO has grown remarkably over the past 10 years. As we continue to develop our role as the Voice of Radiation Oncology in Canada, there are nonetheless important challenges to be faced. I look forward to working with the new, fresh-faced colleagues who have joined the CARO Board of Directors just recently. This group brings wisdom, energy and dynamism to CARO and will help to steer our organization well. I would like to briefly update you on several ongoing developments which I think are of significant importance to CARO members:

Canadian Radiation Oncology Foundation Sanofi-Aventis Research Innovation Awards (CASARIA)

The Canadian Radiation Oncology Foundation and CARO will shortly announce a new partnership with Sanofi-Aventis. Final arrangements for a new research competition will be announced in the areas of rectal and prostate cancer this year, with total funding in the range of \$140,000. CARO members will be eligible to apply for seed funding grants, which will be awarded on a competitive basis through a peer-review panel. If successful, we hope to encourage an ongoing partnership program with Sanofi-Aventis as we have done with other industry partners, for support of novel research ideas in the above mentioned theme areas. Watch for the formal announcement later this spring!

Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) – National Pathology Standards Meeting with CARO

Recently the Board participated in a WebEx presented by Dr. John Srigley, on the topics of the CPAC National Pathology Staging Initiative and complementary work that is being done with the surgical synoptic reporting project. Without doubt there are members of CARO who have been involved with the National Staging Advisory Committee, which has developed recommendations for collaborative staging of breast, prostate, colorectal and lung cancer for cases diagnosed from 2010 onwards in Canada. The bottom line is that in late 2009, the Canadian Association of Pathologists proactively endorsed the College of American Pathologists synoptic cancer protocols. Uniform synoptic reporting will be a huge step towards for cancer surgical pathology practice in Canada. The benefits of this for population-based health research are huge. CARO endorses this initiative and encourages CPAC to develop a report card to evaluate how the provincial cancer programs and agencies across Canada take up and utilize these standards. I think the true impact though will be felt at the individual patient management level, as clear and transparent pathology reporting is central to our own practices. Ultimately, Canadian oncology patients should benefit from this initiative.

Enhancing Specialists' Competence: New Royal College Diploma Programs

In November 2009, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada has developed a draft proposal for the creation of a new category of Royal College discipline recognition: the Diploma category. Currently, a huge consultation progress is being undertaken with key stakeholders in Canadian medical education and specialty care. Dr. Dorianne Rheume, Chair of the Royal College Specialty Committee on Radiation Oncology, has summarized the salient details of the proposed Diploma category in her attached letter.

Essentially, the Diploma category will be meant to complement - not in any way replace - the traditional Fellowship designation. Recognition of enhanced competency in areas like pediatric radiation oncology, prostate brachytherapy, or cranial stereotactic radiosurgery could be considered as this program develops. The Specialty Committee of the Royal College will ultimately be responsible for creating curricula and standards for achieving the Diploma, but CARO pledges to advocate for broad consultation and input by Canadian Radiation Oncologists as this initiative takes its true form.

Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre Linac Issue

As many of you are aware, a controversial situation was reported at the 2009 Annual General Meeting that involved the purchase of a linac by the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre Corporation using public and private funds. CARO members were concerned about the general lack of consultation from appropriate experts in this capital purchase, and also were disturbed by unresolved questions regarding the functional plan for its use. On behalf of the CARO Board, a letter was written to the Chief Operating Officer of the Winnipeg HSC outlining concerns about the need for appropriate involvement of qualified Specialists in the treatment of patients with radiotherapy, and in general our concerns about quality of care standards for assessment and management of cancer patients. I am happy to say that it appears that this issue is moving towards a good resolution because of a better collaborative understanding between the Winnipeg HSC and Cancer Care Manitoba. It now has been clarified that Radiation Oncology and Physics colleagues from Winnipeg will be fully engaged in the linac's function program, according to the reply co-signed by Mr. Adam Topp of the HSC and Dr. Dhaliwal from Cancer Care Manitoba. In many ways, this situation has alerted our membership to the fact that non-oncology colleagues have come to recognize the superb technological advancements that have revolutionized our field, and that we must not take for granted the central role Radiation Oncology plays in the multidisciplinary management of cancer patients.



CARO Newsletter

After consultation with our members, the Board is delighted to announce the renaissance of a re-invigorated CARO newsletter. We are especially grateful to Dr. Stephan Larsson (Victoria) for volunteering to assume the role of Editor-in-Chief. Thanks as well to all members who have offered to participate in the newsletter in a corresponding author or editor capacity. The newsletter is an ideal vehicle for informal news, opinions, and notices of current events, both happy and sad, that affect our members. On that note, the CARO Board was

proud to note the recent accomplishment of Dr. Brita Danielson (Edmonton) who on December 14th, 2009 participated in the Olympic Torch Relay along with a select group of Canadian Medical Association members as it passed through Cornwall, Ontario. Brava!

Look for a new issue of the CARO Newsletter to arrive electronically sometime in 2010.

Please accept my sincere wishes for a healthy and happy 2010 to you and your families. Bonne Année à tous!

Sincerely,

Matthew B. Parliament, MD, FRCPC
President, Canadian Association of Radiation Oncology



January 11, 2010

To: Members of the Canadian Association of Radiation Oncology

Enhancing Specialist Competence: New Royal College Diploma Program

Matthew and I thought it would be appropriate to jointly introduce an important Royal College initiative to CARO Members.

The Royal College is proposing the creation of a new program to acknowledge and accredit areas of specific advanced competence and expertise within specialty practice. The proposal for a Diploma Program was developed by the Office of Education of the Royal College, reviewed by the Royal College Committee on Specialties and was presented to the Specialty Chairs in November 2009.

Currently wide input is being sought about perceived challenges and benefits, including from Medical School and Postgraduate Deans, provincial Ministries of Health, Regulatory Authorities, national Resident Associations, and National Specialty Societies, including CARO-ACRO.

The new Diploma Program would allow formal recognition by the Royal College and for the creation of national standards in areas of specific advanced competencies. The advanced competency would enhance, rather than replace, the existing scope of specialty or subspecialty practice. It would embrace specific expertise within a generalist-specialist practice.

Of interest, the Royal College is also proposing a Foundations Program, which comprises a 2-4 year core curriculum of fundamental competencies and which might also encourage generalist practice.

Possible Diploma Program examples within our Specialty might include areas of technical or clinical practice: Brachytherapy, Stereotactic Radiotherapy, Paediatric Radiation Oncology or Palliative Radiation Oncology. The areas that might be developed within Radiation Oncology would be identified through consultation between the Specialty Committee and CARO-ACRO. The criteria for training, evaluation and maintenance of certification would be established by the Specialty Committee.

The model includes a couple of avenues to Diploma designation:

1. 1-2 years of training with assessment through a summative portfolio. This could comprise a formalized, approved fellowship (and could even begin during the existing post-graduate training years).
2. For those who are currently practicing with an area of specific expertise, a Practice Eligibility Route would be possible, and would likely involve documentation or observation of practice.

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You will soon be individually surveyed by the Royal College or can contact Jason Frank, Associate Director, Office of Education or Sarah Taber, Manager, Specialty Standards, Policy and Development or esc@royalcollege.ca. More details about the Diploma Program are also available on the Royal College website.

Please feel free to contact me or Matthew with your thoughts on this important proposal.



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Chair, Royal College Specialty Committee for Radiation Oncology