

Footprints

By Glen Thomson, MD, FRCPC

What do we really want to know? And about what? Some things are important to know, while others may be less interesting or perhaps even disturbing. Is ignorance bliss or just a way of coping with a threatening reality? In this issue, Dr. Edward Johnson explores what patients want to know—from us. Accordingly, “Consenting to be Informed” is this issue’s Joint Count survey.

Those of us who attended the 2nd Mexican-Canadian Congress of Rheumatology (the Cancun Congress) were exposed to a lot of information over the four days of meetings. This issue highlights the scientific meeting, the organizational challenges, and the more social aspects of the Congress. Our hosts from the Mexican College of Rheumatology (MCR) were, as always, most gracious and the setting could not have been more beautiful, at least after the tropical storm passed. The front cover celebrates the winners of the *Journal of the Canadian Rheumatology Association’s (CRAJ)* photo contest and the back cover depicts great photos from the meeting. Thank you to all who submitted their photos! It was a great pleasure and difficult task to select our winners this year.

The Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRA) meetings are always convivial affairs much like a family reunion; this year included some distant cousins. Our colleagues from the MCR face most of the same issues as we do in the practice of rheumatology. They are keenly aware of their extra challenges at this time in Mexico. Many, who live mere miles from where we were conversing about the cutting edge of science, exist centuries away from modern education and healthcare. I was personally struck by the great gulf between the opulence of our hotel and convention centre and the dilapidated Mexican homes beside the highways.

With this in mind, I have made the suggestion to the CRA Executive that we donate a portion of the profit made by the CRA at this meeting to local Cancun educational or health-related charities. It has been stated that this would be an insignificant drop in the bucket and that charity begins at home. After all, Canada still faces challenges even with the billions that we spend on our persistently porous social safety net. I have worked in the inner city and have been a northern primary-care physician. But I was still moved by the absolute penury of so many. We may wish to ignore this reality, but in the end, poverty is poverty. I would like to think that the members of the CRA want to leave something more tangible behind than footprints in the sand.

Two members of the CRA recently departed and left behind far more than mere imprints of their journeys. I did not know Antoine Helewa, but I wish I had. Those who knew him remember a kind and generous man who was a leader in both clinical and research physiotherapy. I did know Dr. David Hawkins, and remember he always took pleasure in maligning Manitoba’s magnificent weather—this coming by way of a man from the clement climate of Newfoundland. Good-natured jibing aside, David was as much of a champion of medical education as Antoine was for the place of allied health professionals in the care of arthritis patients.

This issue also features interviews with our 2011 CRA Awardees who were celebrated in Cancun. There are recipes for success and a smile or two. Is there a reason why Gunnar Kraag is loathe to be seen in Winnipeg from late spring until after the third week of November? Read on.

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