

# Editorial: Spring 2023: Canadian NDs and Environmental Leadership



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As I write this letter on a late February afternoon in Ottawa, we've just been told that the Rideau canal skateway, the world's largest outdoor skating rink, will not open this year at all, the first time since 1970. As one of the coldest national capitals anywhere in the world, this has been a wake-up call for people of the city and our various levels of government. In a very odd moment of dissonance, however, I noticed that our annual Winterlude festival was sponsored by a natural gas producer, with the argument that its product does not actually contribute to climate change.

While the non-opening of an open-air skating rink (no matter how large) during a winter festival may seem like a minor event in our warming global environment, there is no doubt that our winters across Canada are becoming shorter, wetter, and with more severe storms of various kinds. Coming on the heels of 3 years of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's also clear that these extreme weather events have hit our vulnerable populations much harder and are having long-lasting health effects on people who have challenges accessing safe housing, clean air and water, and adequate food.

As mentioned in my letter last spring, I've just completed a 9-month healthcare leadership mobilization course with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE). During our monthly training sessions, I've heard many compelling stories from healthcare providers about how weather events brought on by climate change are affecting our patients and communities and how we can mobilize for effective lobbying in areas such as clean electricity standards, pollution protection, and universal rights to healthy air and water. We also discussed the increases we are all seeing of pollen- and vector-borne diseases (such as Lyme disease) and respiratory issues caused by wildfires and deteriorating air quality in cities post-pandemic. Our group then reflected on the importance of building teams to help mobilize for change on these issues, then strategizing and acting to share the message of why targeted changes in policy are necessary and how this can come about through political engagement.<sup>1</sup>

With the first cohort of this project recently wrapped up, I would encourage members to have a look at some of CAPE's current

initiatives and consider getting involved with one of the regional committees or applying for the next Advocacy and Mobilization Program (AMP) cohort, which will be starting later this year. Like the Park Rx program, these projects are entirely congruent with our philosophy of the link between the individual and the planetary, and they are another way we can show up for our communities and, with like-minded healthcare colleagues, offer a trusted voice. It's also a way to not feel isolated, wondering what to do or where to start, a common feeling articulated by many of the participants.

This edition leads off with a World Naturopathic Federation (WNF) sponsored interim report on a living systematic review of natural health products (NHPs) for the prevention and/or treatment of COVID-19. As the authors point out, there is increasing interest in research in this area, particularly in NHP therapeutics for prevention and adjunctive COVID-19 treatment. However, there is a need for more consistent outcome reporting before findings can be reported with reasonable evidence quality.

Our other published study for this edition is a cross-sectional analysis of Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine (CCNM) graduate retention, the first to consider this question in the Canadian environment. After surveying targeted cohorts from both Toronto and Vancouver campuses between 1997 and 2020, they found retention rates closely correlate with other regulated health professions 2 to 3 years post-graduation. They also found that most graduates held registration in the province of their program, and that where prescriptive authority was available as an optional certification, a large majority of graduates held that certification. It will be interesting to see what conversations their findings elicit on this topic in ND leadership and at the association level and whether this will encourage more studies about long-term professional development and retention.

With this edition, we say goodbye to several editorial board members, who have moved onto other professional roles, and I want to thank them for their contributions to our continual improvement here at *CANDJ*. In particular, I want to recognize the

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efforts of our retiring board member Jacob Schorr, ND FABNO, who was one of the original members of the *Vital Link* review board, along with myself, Iva Lloyd (then EIC), and Paul Saunders, back in 2009. At the time, Jacob was also an editor at the *Natural Medicine Journal* and *Naturopathic Doctor News and Review*, and I remember many spirited conversations over the years about the state of naturopathic medical publications and what could be done to create stronger and more science-based standards, while maintaining our respect for traditional and complementary medicines (T&CM) in their cultural contexts. Now 14 years later, I would argue that we are well along with seeing those ideas come to fruition in this publication, which itself continues to grow and evolve.

We wish Jacob a happy and healthy retirement; and hope everyone enjoys this current edition.

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#### REFERENCE

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