

Message from the President

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Susan Nelson-Oxford, MSc, RAUD, RHIP

This year we are having our 17th annual CAA national conference in Whistler, British Columbia. Our first conference was held in 1998 in Mississauga, Ontario. Soon after the idea came about that a national association with a national conference should afford equal opportunity for attendance across our great nation and the concept of moving venues quickly became the norm. CAA conferences have been held in Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Niagara Falls, Quebec City, Montreal, Halifax and this past year the fun city of St. John's Newfoundland.

I interviewed Gurjit Singh, director on the board and conference co-chair.

Susan Nelson-Oxford (SNO): Gurjit, you were a key person in organizing last year's conference. Can you give us a brief idea on what is involved in putting together a "world-class" conference? What are some of the challenges?

Gurjit Singh: It has been a tremendous honour helping to put together a world-class conference for the Canadian Academy of Audiology. There is a small but dedicated army of volunteers who make this conference happen. It would not be possible without their sweat, expertise, creativity, and hard work! It's truly a team effort and I very much appreciate the willingness of the group to give their time throughout the year to ensure we offer the best conference experience possible. The biggest challenge is creating a dynamic and exciting program that exposes clinicians to interesting new ideas that are relevant to their practice. We want to create a memorable social experience that celebrates our members and that fosters a sense of community amongst Canadian hearing health care professionals. And of course, we want to do all of this in a fantastic location and at a price point that does not break the bank. I think the 2013 conference was a great example of this! Last year, we were welcomed with open arms by St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador and the feedback we received from attendees' was overwhelmingly positive! 2013 obviously set a high bar, and in my humble view, people will be just as excited and energized by this year's location and program. Attendees will be equally inspired by the majesty of Whistler's beauty and by the amazing line-up of cutting-edge speakers once again drawn from top tier institutions from around the world.

SNO: I am all ears! Tell us a bit about this year's line-up.

GS: This year's line-up will have something for everybody interested in hearing health care. Traditionally, there are two pre-conference workshops and this year is no exception. Glynnis Tidball, Richard Tyler, and Carol Bauer will provide participants with an up-to-date review of best practices for assisting patients with tinnitus. Kathy Pichora-Fuller and a panel of international researchers will present information on the re-emergence and application of lessons learned in health and social psychology to audiology. I have no doubt that participants of either workshop will be exposed to exciting new research that will have a positive impact on the lives of our patients.

Kicking off the conference this year is Professor Adrian Davis, the director of population health science at Public Health England. Professor Davis has received lifetime career awards for his contributions to audiology and health care from the National Health Service and the American Academy of Audiology. He was instrumental in creating England's National Hearing Service Newborn Hearing Screening Program, has published 250+ articles, chapters, and books, and he shows no sign of slowing down! The CAA is tremendously honoured that Professor Davis will be sharing his thoughts on the global issue of hearing loss and possible solutions to address this significant public health concern.

Last year in St. John's, we started each day with a plenary session, and the feedback was that attendees loved that some talks were scheduled at a time when everyone could attend. This year in Whistler, Day 2 will begin with a plenary presentation by Dr. Theresa Chisholm on how to develop individualized patient care using an evidenced-based approach. Dr. Chisholm exemplifies what it means to be an educator and researcher, having received numerous teaching honours and AAA's Distinguished Achievement Award. Her dedication and enthusiasm for audiology is sure to inspire. Day 3 will begin with a plenary presentation by Dr. David Fabry on the transforming retail landscape in audiology and the shift away from "mom and pop" hearing clinics to chains and networks of clinics (and whether or not this is a good thing). Dr. Fabry is an amazing and dynamic speaker and has been a respected industry leader for over two decades. I can't wait to hear this presentation!

Finally, the break-out sessions this year will be fantastic and will cover a broad range of topics. Several examples include "What every Audiologist Needs to Know about Autism Spectrum Disorders," "Occupational Hazards of Delivering Health Care," and Mead Killion's "Everything I Know about Hearing Loss." The speakers in the breakout sessions include several individuals who could easily have been selected to deliver the keynote presentation as well as rising young superstars. I have confidence that attendees will be able to successfully tailor their schedules to accommodate their personal learning goals.

SNO: Thanks so much for this Gurjit! The countdown is now on. Whistler is a fabulous venue and the program sounds amazing. We also have some interesting social activities planned. I'm looking forward to meeting everyone in Whistler, October 15-18.

For more information please visit the conference website at:
<http://www.canadianaudiology.ca/2014-conference/home.html>