

Why you should become a member of CAGS today...

I often get asked by my colleagues, “Why should I join CAGS?” You would think it would be an easy sell – after all CAGS is the national voice for General Surgery in Canada. Why wouldn’t you join CAGS? Well...

OK, I confess, when I joined CAGS, it was solely so I could present some of my fellowship research at the Canadian Surgery Forum (CSF). I have to admit, I wasn’t impressed at the time. The forum was way too scientific, and hardly practical (who really cares about the molecular activity of mitochondria in reaction to cisplatin based chemotherapy??). The governance structure at CAGS was ruled by the academic surgeons of the land. Since they didn’t have my type of practice I wondered if they really could speak for me? What was I to do? There I was, a reluctant new member of a group I wasn’t sure could/would adequately represent my needs as a new surgeon. On top of that, early on in my membership, I was “volun-told” into the position of provincial representative to the CAGS board! Great, more boring meetings of dubious value!!

But these academic-based leader types really are intelligent people who deserved their positions. Only a few years after I joined, CAGS initiated a governance review and the shortcomings of how CAGS was structured were explored. Those academic leader types realized the voice of the community surgeon needed to be better heard. They welcomed the thoughts and ideas of exciting young General Surgeons from all experiences, including my own! They welcomed any and all changes that would advance the four pillars of the CAGS mission. CAGS evolved.

Simultaneously, the CSF steering committee recognized the deficiencies of the CSF. Each and every year since I joined CAGS, based on the feedback from the attendees, the meeting has been improved. These progressive steps have turned the CSF into an essential annual event for education, research, and advocacy. Given the annual rise in attendance figures, I am not the only one to appreciate this progress!

CAGS has become, and continues to grow into a body capable of advocating for patients and General Surgeons of Canada. When the Wait Times Alliance wanted to expand and address wait times for more than eye and hip surgery, they turned to CAGS for our expertise. When the General Surgeons of Canada faced eroding access to endoscopy resources, CAGS addressed the issue. Not only has CAGS taken steps to ensure that governments remain acutely aware that General Surgery provides an essential and invaluable contribution in providing endoscopic care (we perform more than 50% of the scopes in Canada annually), but CAGS also has continued to work on a partnership with the Canadian Association of Gastroenterologists to ensure that General surgery will always have a voice in the provision of endoscopic services. As well, CAGS is working diligently to create educational opportunities to ensure that the General Surgeons of Canada continue to offer the highest possible level of care to our patients. As we move to the future, CAGS is tackling the issue of access to care for our rural and remote patients, and how best to support the surgeons at the frontlines providing that care. CAGS is actively stepping into a leadership role to ensure that all Canadians have access to the right care, by the right provider, regardless of where they reside.

I have been known to say, that one cannot complain unless one brings a potential solution to the table. It’s kind of like not deserving to whine about the current government overlords if you didn’t actually vote. We are all practicing in times of stress and turmoil. Now more than ever, we as General Surgeons need a strong National body to help us negotiate the ever-changing landscape of our specialty. We need to communicate what happens in Newfoundland, because it may have impact

on what goes on in B.C., and all the places in between. On behalf of our patients, we need to share ideas and knowledge; we need to advance the science of surgery; and, we must advocate for one another with a unified voice. We, the General surgeons of Canada, need CAGS, now more than ever, but ***for CAGS to be a success, CAGS needs all of us to enroll and participate – to share ALL of our concerns and our solutions with each other.*** That is reason why I believe every General Surgeon in Canada should join CAGS.

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