A message from Dr Wilbert J Keon

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It is my great pleasure to send best wishes to my colleagues, friends and former students during the 60th anniversary celebrations of the Canadian Cardiovascular Society (CCS).

Over the past few decades, we have evolved from what was, in essence, an academic club for cardiologists, cardiac surgeons and other related specialists to what is a very active, influential, scientific society today. Our initial mandate was to simply bring scientists together – to serve as a forum for national meetings and the exchange of ideas in an era when ready access via electronic means could scarcely have been imagined. As the CCS matured, however, our meetings attracted far wider attention as we explored and debated the groundbreaking research performed by our colleagues across Canada. These gatherings continue to provide a vital and ongoing status report on the state-of-the-art in cardiovascular science at any given time.

The CCS has actively engaged other cardiovascular resources in Canada and around the world so that cooperative clinical trials of basic scientific discoveries are being promoted to benefit Canadians. The Society is also keenly aware of its responsibility to help educate the next generation of bright minds and home-grown pioneers. There are superb educational programs that stem from each annual conference. These encourage the interface of young people in cardiovascular medicine and science with the elders of the Society. I call this vital relationship between youth and experience ‘the interchange between energy and wisdom’.

When I was President of the Society in the late 1980s, Canada was witnessing an explosion in the evolution and application of angioplasty procedures, and we began to profit to a greater degree than ever from the wider use of new technologies. This applied especially to ‘assist devices’, with which I was extensively involved in my own work. The nation as a whole was beginning to share the medical profession’s long-standing concern that heart failure was a major health problem in Canada. Despite ‘ParticipACTION’ and more public awareness of the need for better nutrition, cardiovascular disease still remains a huge problem.

Although we have been able to palliate many other conditions, such as valve failure and coronary artery disease, patients are living longer and entering an extended phase whereby the assist pump can no longer sustain the required pace – and fails. Assist pumps simply have not evolved as quickly as we, in our profession, have been hoping they would, but I am convinced that more encouraging results are just around the corner.

Although the CCS maintains its primary focus on the actual science of cardiac medicine, we acknowledge that our work takes place in a wider social context, which explains our increasing involvement in the development of health policy. During the past 20 years, we have developed an excellent relationship with governments at all levels. We have made our scientific advice and clinical platforms sought after and respected. To give only one example, I am confident that Canada’s Heart Health Strategy will make a tremendous contribution when completed, because it allows everybody in the system from government on down to participate. What I want this strategy to accomplish over the next decade is the establishment of a level of control over more variables in cardiovascular disease that cause death and disability, thus making a healthy and comfortable life more predictable. I would also like to see a greater emphasis on the prevention through education, and the sooner the better. When I see 13-year-olds smoking at bus stops and in parks while telling themselves, “heart disease can’t affect me”, I wonder where we have failed as a society in getting the message across.

This is just one of many themes I look forward to exploring with all of you at the 2007 annual conference in Quebec City, Quebec. Whether in plenary sessions or informal talks over dinner, we must examine ways in which to ensure our therapies cover three vital bases: they respect the fact that patients have feelings and families as well as afflictions, they are always rooted in sound theory, and they reflect the reality that all cardiac care professionals must remain on the leading edge of the voyage of discovery we call science.

This October, we will have a lot to commemorate as we look over the past 60 years – and twice as much to aim for at our next milestone.