What Every Member-in-Training Needs To Know: Update on the MIT Section

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The members-in-training section (MIT) of the Canadian Psychiatric Association (CPA) is an active and dynamic group. Though this space is traditionally reserved for articles written by residents, in this issue we have decided to let our members know a little bit more about ongoing work and future developments planned for the members-in-training.

Who are the members-in-training?
The MIT section encompasses all students, residents and fellows who are members of the CPA. The idea behind the creation of this section was to support the future of the CPA by encouraging interest among future generations of psychiatrists and to promote resident issues and concerns within the CPA. The section is headed by a chairperson elected by the members-in-training at the annual general meeting (to be held this year in Montreal). The chairperson coordinates activities and initiatives on behalf of the section.

In the past, the section leadership consisted of a secretary and chair-elect. Owing to the smaller section size, recruitment for these positions has become more of a challenge. The MIT chair also has several other functions within the CPA; these include representing resident concerns on the Standing Committee For Education, editing the Residents section of the Bulletin and sitting on the Membership Affairs Committee. These committees generally meet twice yearly, at the annual general meeting and the spring meeting.

How does the MIT section relate to other resident bodies across Canada?
With many different levels of representation for residents, it sometimes becomes confusing to see where the MIT section fits in. The Coordinators of Postgraduate Education in Psychiatry (COPE) is a group comprising the training directors of each school and resident representatives elected from each psychiatry training program. COPE is involved in educational concerns for psychiatry residents across the country. Although COPE’s biannual meetings take place at the CPA annual general and spring meetings, COPE is not a part of the CPA.

The directors-in-training (DITs) are resident representatives elected by the members-in-training to serve a two-year term as members of the CPA’s Board of Governors. Traditionally elected to reflect regional representation (each DIT should represent a different region of Canada), the DITs are not formally integrated with the MIT section and serve as separate representatives of their constituency (that is, the members-in-training at large). This structure has become difficult to maintain, given diminishing resident interest and the inability at times to elect representatives from desired regions. As well, because there are no formal links to the MIT section or its chair, there is no way for these two groups to communicate directly.

This past year, we have made several strides to integrate these separate groups and facilitate communication among residents. As MIT chair, I was pleased to attend the COPE resident meeting this spring and to discuss ways in which COPE and the CPA members-in-training could work together. Suggestions included developing a common or linked Web site and the MIT chair’s continuing attendance at the COPE resident meeting. As well, there is some possibility of having a COPE member sit on the Standing Committee for Education, which would increase the transfer of information from COPE’s resident perspective to the CPA.

I am also presently serving as DIT for a one-year term, thereby increasing our section’s awareness of matters discussed by the Board. It has been suggested that the MIT chair serve as a DIT in the future, again to increase communication and integration between resident groups.

Communication: What can we do?
Communication within the MIT section has traditionally been an area for improvement. In 2001, Dr. Gunter Lorberg, past MIT section chair, discussed this problem in the Bulletin (1). With a large geographical distance separating residents across Canada, there was no national forum in which residents could exchange ideas or information. With CPA support, a Web-conferencing site was developed for the members-in-training. This conferencing site has suffered from a lack of useful information, poor maintenance and support and a lack of publicity. At the time of this article, the Web-conferencing software is being upgraded, and we hope that this will become a

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means by which we can regularly communicate with CPA members-in-training. Possible uses for this space include information sharing about different psychiatry programs across the country (possibly in conjunction with COPE) as well as fellowship and award opportunities both within and outside the CPA. In addition, regular section activities could be posted.

**What have we achieved?**
The MIT section and the DITs have been busy in this past year. Members-in-training now have access to online continuing professional development material posted by the CPA at no additional charge. At the Halifax annual meeting, a special seminar organized by past MIT chair Dr. Khrista Boylan discussed transitions to practice for residents and fellows. Our goal for this year’s annual meeting is to plan and advertise events directed toward residents, including a dinner where we would all have a chance to meet socially, in addition to our MIT section meeting.

Future goals include improving our online communication, developing more program content for residents at the annual meeting and, for interested residents, developing mentorship programs with CPA-affiliated staff across the country.

**What can you do?**
Become involved! Let me know if you have ideas or suggestions for making the CPA more relevant for you. At present, we are recruiting the next MIT chair. If you are interested, do not hesitate to contact me. As well, if you or any colleagues are interested in writing for the *Bulletin* please feel free to let us know. Until our next meeting in Montreal, I can be reached at the following e-mail address: kjablo@po-box.mcgill.ca.

**Reference**