Do we need an annual Canadian respiratory conference?

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Beginning in the fall of 2001, as decided at the 1999 Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS), the Society's annual and scientific meeting will take place jointly with the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP). In the past, this annual event was held in conjunction with the Royal College of Physicians' meeting. Unfortunately, attendance at the Royal College meetings was quite low, and the event did not seem to fulfil the needs and interests of the Canadian respiratory community. Therefore, a three-year trial agreement was reached for a joint annual meeting with the ACCP. This joint meeting would offer, among many incentives, the opportunity for Canadian physicians and fellows to attend an international meeting at which Canadian initiatives would have a lot of visibility and educational activities would be available.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing consensus that it would also be of interest to hold an annual respiratory meeting in Canada. To be truly valuable, however, this meeting must be innovative in its content and structure. In the past, the CTS has promoted such meetings (eg, to establish guidelines) in collaboration with other groups and associations; however, I feel that it is time to reconsider the possibility of holding such a meeting in Canada for a number of reasons.

There is a need to regularly review therapeutic guidelines for respiratory problems, and to discuss the current interna-

tional consensus in regard to their applicability to Canadian practice (eg, incoming GOLD [Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease]). Yearly reviews may be done and 'hot topics' discussed in different formats, including the challenging 'pros and cons' format. We should also consider widening the scope of such an annual respiratory event by offering other groups (eg, allergists, asthma education networks, provincial and federal health authorities) the opportunity to join us. Both adult and pediatric issues should be considered. Industrial partners have been developing major disease management programs and educational activities. An annual respiratory review meeting would provide us with the opportunity to offer feedback on these types of programs. In addition, it would allow us to discuss the role and use of the different therapies already developed or under investigation. Other respiratory events could be linked with this one.

Your comments on this important topic are welcomed.