The Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta is a non-profit organization that endeavours to provide effective representation for physicians completing further training in a residency program. PARA advocates excellence in education and patient care while striving to achieve optimal working conditions and personal well-being for all its members.

PARA is run by resident physicians, for resident physicians.
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Important Numbers:
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4. PARA enhances resident physician well-being by organizing community and wellness events, information seminars, and educational workshops.
3. PARA advocates for individual resident physicians experiencing personal, academic, or professional challenges.
2. PARA also provides its members with access to: life insurance, long-term disability, health and dental coverage, maternity and parental benefits, compassionate benefits, taxi reimbursement program.
1. PARA negotiates an Agreement on your behalf that deals with the non-academic aspects of residency training in Alberta such as: salary, well-being benefits, stipends, on-call services expectations, and working conditions.

How can you get involved?
PARA volunteer opportunities include:
• Serving on the Assembly
• Serving on committees and working groups
• Serving as an ambassador at external stakeholder meetings
• Involvement in the planning of events and campaigns such as Resident Physicians in the Legislature, the PARAdime Charity Campaign, and social events
• Attending PARA education, advocacy, and social events.

How do we do all this?
PARA was incorporated in 1975 and has a voluntary recognition agreement with the Educating and Employing Entities (EEE) made up of the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and Alberta Health Services.
PARA collects mandatory dues from each resident physician who is paid through Alberta Health Services. Of these dues, approximately a quarter goes to the Resident Doctors of Canada. These dues are tax deductible and are amongst the lowest in the country.

Informed • Empowered • Involved

PARA's Vision
Informed about our patients' health and innovations in medicine.
Empowered to create healthy professional working and learning environments.
Involved in shaping the future of health care delivery in Alberta.

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What exactly does PARA do?
1. PARA negotiates an Agreement on your behalf that deals with the non-academic aspects of residency training in Alberta such as: salary, well-being benefits, stipends, on-call services expectations, and working conditions.
2. PARA also provides its members with access to: life insurance, long-term disability, health and dental coverage, maternity and parental benefits, compassionate benefits, taxi reimbursement program.
3. PARA strives to ensure compliance to the terms of the Resident Physician Agreement.
4. PARA enhances resident physician well-being by organizing community and wellness events, information seminars, and educational workshops.
5. PARA advocates for individual resident physicians experiencing personal, academic, or professional challenges.
6. PARA offers advocacy opportunities to its members to advocate on behalf of all resident physicians as a whole at all levels with various organizations.

The Assembly is elected prior to the first PARA Assembly meeting of each new academic year. Resident physicians interested in becoming involved with PARA either on the Assembly or one of PARA’s committees should contact the PARA office for more information. The Resident Physician Agreement provides for time off with pay for your involvement with PARA. All reasonable costs associated with attending meetings are fully reimbursed. Remember, PARA depends on volunteer resident physicians. Your colleagues need you!
Dr. Rafiaa Valji

Calgary & Southern Alberta Ambassador  

Pediatrics, PGY 4, University of Calgary

Dr. Valji is a prairie girl. She grew up in Edmonton, completed medical school at the University of Alberta and moved to Calgary for residency. She is currently a fourth year paediatrics resident physician. She served as a PARA Assembly Member for the past two years and is excited to be the Calgary and Southern Alberta Representative. Outside of medicine, she enjoys running, hiking and being a dessert connoisseur.

Dr. Mark Lipson

President  

General Surgery, PGY4, University of Calgary

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Dr. Lipson completed his B.Sc and M.D. there. Along the way he spent a season working on the slopes at Sunshine Village and fell in love with the Rockies. In medical school Mark was heavily involved as the Vice President Internal/Academic and President of the Manitoba Medical Students Association. With medical school complete, he escaped the prairie winters in Manitoba for the chinook winds of Calgary for General Surgery Residency. Luckily for him, the love of his life followed him to Calgary. Mark's wife, a family physician, helps to provide humour, balance, and inject a primary care perspective into his approach to medicine, residency and resident physician advocacy.

Dr. Sameea Qureshi

Edmonton & Northern Alberta Ambassador

Internal Medicine, PGY 2, University of Alberta

Dr. Qureshi is a second year internal medicine resident at the University of Alberta. She serves as PARA’s Edmonton and Northern Alberta Ambassador and is committed to acting as an advocate for resident physicians and enhancing medical education. Dr. Qureshi served on the PARA Assembly as a Member at Large in her first year, and is excited to continue as a part of such a great team, all working towards the same goal of improving the lives of resident physicians both personally and professionally.

Dr. Catherine Cheng

Past President

Radiation Oncology, PGY 5, University of Alberta

Dr. Logie is a fifth year radiation oncology resident at the University of Alberta. She has a strong interest in global health and in particular global public policy. Prior to serving on PARA she was the VP Global Health for the Canadian Federation of Medical Students and the National Officer of Human Rights and Peace. Some of her favourite things to do are to run and write. She has an educational background in pharmacology, epidemiology, global health and public health. She is excited to be representing Alberta resident physicians on the Alberta Medical Association Board this year!

Dr. Nicole Delaney

Vice President Community & Internal Relations  

Anatomical Pathology, PGY 4, University of Alberta

Dr. Delaney is originally from Halifax, Nova Scotia where she attended Dalhousie University for her undergraduate degree and medical school. She moved westward to pursue residency in Anatomical Pathology at the University of Alberta where she is currently in her fourth year of training (PGY-4). Dr. Delaney originally became involved with PARA as a first-year resident to help meet new people as well as to learn more about medical administration and leadership. Specifically, she has been involved with the annual PARAdime campaign for the past three years. Nicole is excited to be on the PARA Executive this year and is happy to answer questions by email if you are thinking of becoming involved with PARA in the future.

Dr. Roshan Abraham

Vice President Leadership & Education  

Family Medicine, PGY 2, University of Alberta

Born and raised in Ottawa, I grew up loving music and getting involved with my community. Whether it was playing in various bands, or volunteering my time with local organizations, I always enjoyed working with others. I continued playing in jazz and rock bands in med school and also invested many years in a student run clinic for mental health. I'm hoping to finish family medicine here at the U of A and settle down in a rural town with my wife, who also is planning on becoming a family doctor.

Dr. Natalie Logie

Past President

Anatomical Pathology, PGY 4, University of Alberta

Dr. Logie is originally from Calgary, completing her Bachelor of Science in Honors Zoology at the University of Calgary. In 2007 she moved to Edmonton to complete her doctor of medicine at the University of Alberta. Currently a fifth year resident in Radiation Oncology at the U of A, Dr. Logie is Chief Resident for her program. Dr. Logie became involved with PARA in 2011, motivated to help Alberta resident physicians achieve well-being. She has served PARA as an aggregate representative, Vice President of Community & Internal Affairs, and most recently as the 2014-2015 President. She is committed to advocating, negotiating and supporting the health and wellness of Alberta residents.
Past Presidents Message

Dear colleagues,

It is hard to believe that nearly half the academic year is behind us. I would like to take some time to reflect on the last few months and look ahead to the new year. PARA and your Assembly delegates have been hard at work representing the interests of resident physicians across Alberta. I want to share with you just some of the excellent work being done and offer an opportunity to engage with us.

It has been an interesting year in Alberta to say the least, with the election of a brand new NDP government, the collapse of oil prices and some difficult economic times across the province. Despite this, we have been laying down foundation for the future. This is a year we can expect to see ongoing work and represent the interests of resident physicians and all Albertans.

While all this has been happening, we have been advocating alongside the Canadian Medical Association and Alberta Medical Association for better care for seniors across Alberta. The Agreement is a bit outdated and needs a rebuild from the ground up. This is a major undertaking and we are making steady progress, hoping to have a new agreement in place by the end of the academic year. Our goal is to create the strongest resident physician agreement in Canada, while maintaining good working relationships with stakeholders and continuing to provide high quality care to all Albertans.

PARA has also gone social, with a Facebook page and a Twitter account so you can get updates on fun events like pub nights, football and hockey game tickets, contests, prizes and other ways to get involved. I encourage you to get social with us by liking our Facebook page and following us on Twitter (@para_ab). You can also reach me or any of the other PARA Executive Board members through the PARA website.

Wishing you to help us answer this question. I believe that we have strived to define for ourselves the core of what we do and so I challenge each of you to help us answer this question. I believe that residency is more than just an organization to which we owe dues. PARA strives to meet the needs of our membership. We depend upon your involvement and feedback. I look forward to the remainder of this academic term working with such a committed team who are well positioned to respond. I am very thankful of all the personal opportunities for growth that PARA has offered me and encourage others to become involved.

Dr. Natalie Logie PARA Past President 2015-2016 Radiation Oncology, PGY 5, University of Alberta

As 2016 approaches and we are half way through the academic year, I have taken some time to reflect upon my involvement with PARA. During my previous term as PARA president (2014-2015 academic year), in addition to the usual PARA operations, there were staffing changes in the PARA office, PARA’s involvement with the U of C Royal College Accreditation and laying the framework for a new Resident Physician Agreement. In May, near the conclusion of my term, there was an unexpected sweeping change in the Alberta legislature. During my presidency, I learned a lot about myself and about how organizations can adapt and grow. Within PARA, we have evolved to adapt to the changing academic and political environment, and while some things have changed others have remained the same. This year, as I began my term as Past President, has marked a year of stability and consistency. I’m enthusiastic to see those currently involved with PARA laying down foundation for the future. This year we can expect to see ongoing work from the negotiations committee, a letter writing campaign with a focus on seniors’ care, PARAdime and continued outreach to the community, and relationship building with the AMA, the CFPSA and PGME in both Calgary and Edmonton. PARA’s executive and staff have inspired me with their hard work and passion.

During this year’s executive retreat, our focus was set on resident physician engagement. This year marks the end of my five years of involvement with PARA and one question remains the same for each year of my involvement. What do resident physicians expect of PARA? This question is something that we have strived to define for ourselves and for PARA as an organization. It is the very core of what we do and so I challenge each of you to help us answer this question. I believe that residency is more than just a period of time in our life to get through. For myself, residency has been a journey, rocky at times, but also one with exciting opportunities that may never be possible again. Embrace these

Dr. Mark Lipson PARA President 2015 - 2016 General Surgery, PGY 4, University of Calgary

Dear Colleagues,

It has been an interesting year in Alberta to say the least, with the election of a brand new NDP government, the collapse of oil prices and some difficult economic times across the province. Despite this, we have been laying down foundation for the future. This is a year we can expect to see ongoing work and represent the interests of resident physicians and all Albertans.

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Dr. Natalie Logie PARA Past President 2015-2016 Radiation Oncology, PGY 5, University of Alberta
Dr. Richard M. Haber, Department Head and Assistant Professor Dermatology, University of Calgary

“Dr. Haber is an excellent clinician. He is consistently thinking outside of the box, and tries to consider all aspects before creating a treatment plan. We always give patients time to ask questions and explain the diagnosis; he never rushes them. He is one of the most thorough physicians I have ever met. Additionally, he has acquired many clinical pearls over his years of training, and is always trying to pass those onto the residents. Dr. Haber always teaches around each case that he presents. He is very hands on; the residents take something away from each patient encounter. He will always gather residents to present and discuss interesting cases. He will help residents think through an appropriate differential and management plan. Dr. Haber goes out of his way to engage residents in learning and inquiring within dermatology. His teaching style is relaxed and he makes every clinical encounter a teaching point. Dr. Haber is known to have an open-door policy, and will always make time for residents regardless of his workload. Dr. Haber acts as a mentor to several residents in our program. He will often share his personal experiences with us, and is always happy to discuss career planning. He consistently goes the extra mile for the residents, and works hard to train us to become well-rounded physicians. Dr. Haber has put in a tremendous amount of work into helping develop new and excellent dermatology program at the U of C. Moreover, his didactic lectures, informal teaching, as well as his morphology sessions have multiple clinical pearls and are packed with clinical information. He is known to put the most time into creating thoughtful, challenging, and practical written exams and OSCEs. Dr. Haber’s goal is to train competent physicians that have the skill set and knowledge to take on any challenge that comes their way. He often emphasizes thinking outside of the box for complex cases, and shows us that we can reach an answer if we rationalize and apply ourselves. He believes that while textbook knowledge is important, clinical experience and interactions with a wide variety of patients and cases are what truly make a good physician.”

Dr. Colleen Sokolowski, Intensivist Critical Care Red Deer, University of Alberta Rural

“Dr. Sokolowski demonstrated a strong commitment to patient care. She would consistently model a systematic and thorough assessment of patients under her care, including any social or family issues related to the patient’s course. Her background in nursing also served to help build strong bonds with the rest of the health care team. Never missing an opportunity for a teaching point, Dr. Sokolowski always ensured there was something to learn from each case or issue. She was particularly committed to teaching residents in the performance of procedures (for example, a rural line placement and intubation). Her approach involved teaching residents to be self-sufficient in the preparation and performance of procedures, which is rarely a focus. This independence confers an extra level of comfort and confidence, equipping residents to be prepared for these procedures under any circumstances. Dr. Sokolowski was clearly committed to the personal development of residents she worked with. She would consistently take the time to understand individual strengths and weaknesses, and work to bolster weaker areas while lauding individual strengths. By pushing residents to the limits of their knowledge and expanding procedural proficiency, Dr. Sokolowski ensured every resident she worked with came away much stronger. Without fail, there was always something to be learned or taught with every case presentation or tioner procedure. Whether it was a novel way to tie sutures for ease of removal, or a way to mix up some pocket pressors for an emergency, Dr. Sokolowski always set clear objectives and direction for the learning. Other physicians might become weary at teaching juniors who rotate through but don’t stay at their centre, Dr. Sokolowski consistently maintained her enthusiasm and passion. Dr. Sokolowski recognized the opportunity that a community ICU rotation provided for one-on-one teaching and volume of procedures, and took advantage of these opportunities. She understood the limitations of major teaching centres for providing volume of procedures, and viewed her own role as an intensivist in a community setting to specifically provide opportunity and teaching in this area.Independence and autonomy are clearly important values to her, and she worked to instill this important skillset in her residents.”

Dr. Keith Tankel, Program Director Radiation Oncology, University of Alberta

“Dr. Tankel was instrumental in arranging our first wellness day in our program in 2013. We have continued to have a yearly wellness day and have been supported by Dr. Tankel both in terms of financial support for this day and to have time off of regularly scheduled clinic events. He has helped to liaise our program with various resources including the University of Alberta wellness committee. Dr. Tankel spends time asking us about our personal wellness at our six month reviews and is aware of resources we may access with the family physician and support group and has supported residents in need of leave of absences in our program. He is aware of both the challenges and opportunities for wellness within our small residency program. While in the clinic with Dr. Tankel, he cultivates wellness in a number of ways. Dr. Tankel will spend time teaching residents in a way that is relevant to our examinations without using shame based learning techniques. He will send articles to residents on various topics of interest and will let residents know about interesting cases to come be part of. Col. Service residents test their knowledge in quality of both his teaching and taking the time to send relevant resources. Dr. Tankel encourages us to be well rounded residents and play to our strengths. While encouraging the required CanMEDS competencies within our program, he also is sure to encourage us to play to our strengths and develop ourselves outside of medicine. First year residents in our program say that they feel welcome and part of our program because of Dr. Tankel and that they appreciate the flexibility our program offers to cultivate ourselves both within and outside of medicine.”

Dr. Dr. Jean Boodhoo, Rural Preceptor Psychiatry, University of Calgary (Rural)

“Dr. Boodhoo demonstrates a strong interest in resident well-being through his approach to teaching. Residents immediately feel very welcome in his office. He has an office space dedicated for use by the resident, spends time reviewing all patients interviewed in detail and reviewed patients during daily self-reflection and self-evaluation. He structures learning experiences in order to set up residents to succeed. He is always interested in finding ways to improve the psychiatry rotation and actively seeks resident input. Dr. Boodhoo enthusiastically shares what he has learned with respect to wellness at various professional meetings and settings he attends, and routinely emphasizes the need to engage in daily wellness activities.”
In 2008, PARA established an annual bursary at both of Alberta’s two medical schools. The bursaries are awarded to graduating medical students who are entering a residency program in Alberta. Selection is based on demonstrated financial need and academic standing. Funds support educational activities, including conferences, courses, seminars, travel, accommodation and living expenses, books, journals and software.

The PARA Bursary award is administered by the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alberta and the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary.

University of Alberta

Carissa Grainger
PGY 1, Family Medicine, University of Calgary

Carissa graduated from the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Medicine in May 2015. She was excited to move back home to begin her residency in Family Medicine at the University of Calgary. Carissa hopes to have a community family practice and low-risk obstetrics practice in Calgary in the future.

University of Calgary

Krystyna Leigh Ediger
PGY1, Pediatrics, University of Calgary

Krystyna graduated from the University of Calgary’s Cumming School of Medicine in May 2015, and subsequently started a residency in General Pediatrics at the University of Calgary. She is currently considering a career in general community pediatrics or potentially pursuing a fellowship in Neonatology.

For more information on the PARA Bursaries, visit the PARA website/News & Events/Awards.
March 2015

Dr. Alexander Kocylum
PGY 3, Diagnostic Radiology
University of Alberta

"Alex is an exemplary resident who has demonstrated impressive clinical, academic, and research achievements, a passion for teaching, and social engagement.

An excellent teacher, Alex has been a mentor to medical students, off service residents and on service juniors. He doesn’t just make sure people get support and answers to their questions, but he also makes sure they have windows opened to questions they may not yet know to ask. On a personal note, Alex has taken time out of his schedule on several occasions to explain radiological findings to me, and help me decide on the best management course for my patients. He’s also assisted both myself and other off service residents in preparing radiological images for rounds presentations.

Outside the workplace, Alex engages in a wide range of activities, including Skiing, Salsa Dancing, Opera, and Scotch tasting. He’s also very involved with his family, coaching his younger brother through his first year of undergrad, and helping out his family members. I am impressed with the balance that he maintains in his life."

April 2015

Dr. Seraj Makkawi
PGY 4, Neurology, University of Calgary

"Seraj has been the Neurology Chief resident from July – December 2014. During this time, he has always been kind and considerate of resident requests, and always puts the best interest of the neurology residents first. He is also very thoughtful, and shares his knowledge (which is extensive) without concern.

He is originally from Saudi Arabia, and joined the Neurology training program in 2011. He is currently finishing a Master’s in Education, and also enjoys travel, especially to warmer climates."

May 2015

Dr. Robbie Sidhu
PGY 3, Internal Medicine, University of Alberta

"Dr. Sidhu has been a friend and mentor of mine for several years. He completely exemplifies all the qualities I think are important in a great physician. He is kind and empathetic with his patients, always joking, laughing and bringing a smile to their face in tough clinical situations. This calm demeanor extends to his learners as well. I have seen Dr. Sidhu with his junior colleagues and medical students and he seems to captivate them with his immense knowledge and ability to simplify complex internal medicine problems.

Dr. Sidhu is an all-around accomplished resident, with significant research activity publishing a first author paper in a major medical journal during his residency. He is actively involved in our internal medicine residency program committee and other social activities. Really he is the internal medicine resident all others strive to be!"

June 2015

Dr. Jan Grendar
PGY 5, General Surgery, University of Calgary

"Jan is extremely deserving of recognition for his work in General Surgery. He is a great colleague, teacher, and advocate for his fellow residents. He has completed research including a randomized controlled trial of pancreatectomy vs. pancreatectogastrostomy in pancreatic surgery, and has been recognized nationally with the Canadian Association of General Surgeons teaching award for residents.

Jan is also a husband and a father, balancing his busy surgical residency with his wife, who is also a resident physician, and their two sons.

"Dr. Grendar is the ideal surgical resident. I don’t mean that he is just an expert surgeon with robot like precision. Jan is also a teacher, a friend, and a natural leader whose love for his profession is infectious to everyone around him. I never would have considered a career as a general surgeon, but working with Jan made me rethink my future career choices.

It doesn’t matter if its in the OR, the emergency department, or on the ward, Jan is able to make each experience memorable in its own way. He is able to recognize his junior colleagues skills and interests and pushes them to learn more and to get excited about what they’re doing.

With me Jan made a point to get me more involved in a laparoscopic procedure, and spent the case teaching anatomy, cracking jokes, and made a routine procedure a great experience for a medical student on their surgical rotation.

Dr. Grendar is the exact type of resident this award was intended for – someone who is passionate about his career and truly cares about the people that work with him."

July 2015

Dr. Lisa Freeman
PGY 3, Public Health and Preventative Medicine, University of Alberta

"Dr. Lisa Freeman is a stand-out amongst her physician colleagues. Having already achieved her CCFP in Family Medicine she is continuing on in further training in public health. Academically brilliant in medicine, she brings her passion and knowledge to public health and specifically health promotion. Lisa believes we must address the social determinants of health and empower people to take control of their health. She is well on her way to do this.

Having been chief resident this year Lisa has organized poducts and get-togethers and made herself available and advocated for all her resident colleagues. Lastly, Lisa lives a balanced lifestyle in the face of her busy schedule. She loves biking, climbing, walks, and hikes with her husband Brandon. Overall, Dr. Freeman deserves recognition for the hard work she has put into the public health residency program as well as the advocacy and promotion she displays for a healthy lifestyle."

August 2015

Dr. Candace Rypien
PGY 3, Pediatrics, University of Calgary

"Only one word can describe Candace - phenomenal. Her organizational skills for us non-pediatric residents and medical students made the rotation much smoother. She was a great delegator for tasks and general orientation. This was all to ensure we were out on time with everything having been completed. Even when someone was wrong (i.e. with medications, consults, etc.) she was always supportive and never demeaning. She took every opportunity to teach everyone at all levels. She made sure she was available to us both via pager and cell phone and took the time to respond after work hours when a personal problem occurred. Only one word can describe Candace - phenomenal. Her organizational skills for us non-pediatric residents and medical students made the rotation much smoother. She was a great delegator for tasks and general orientation. This was all to ensure we were out on time with everything having been completed. Even when someone was wrong (i.e. with medications, consults, etc.) she was always supportive and never demeaning. She took every opportunity to teach everyone at all levels. She made sure she was available to us both via pager and cell phone and took the time to respond after work hours when a personal problem occurred."

Nominate a colleague for Resident Physician of the Month today!
Nomination forms can be found at www.para-ab.ca under News & Events/Awards

www.para-ab.ca / volume 34 fall 2015

The PARA Resident Physician of the Month Award is an initiative focused on improving Resident Physician well-being by recognizing and rewarding Resident Physicians who make a positive contribution to their work environment while maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Recipients are recognized in the Fall or Spring PARAphrasis and the monthly PARAscope. They also receive a monetary award and a recognition letter is sent to their program director.
As per our mission, PARA strives to continue to improve our members’ well-being and to be both an advocate for quality education and to develop and support educational opportunities for PARA members. To this end, PARA has developed the PARA Conference Sponsorship Program to provide funding for Resident Physicians to attend a select number of conferences.

2015-2016 Conferences
This year, sponsorship for attendance is available for the following conferences:

- Canadian Conference on Physician Health
  October 16-17, 2015
  Winnipeg, Manitoba
  Deadline for applications: CLOSED

- Canadian Conference on Medical Education
  April 16-19, 2016
  Montréal, Québec
  Deadline for applications: January 15, 2016

Interested applicants must submit a one-page summary to PARA indicating who they are, their leadership experience and why they wish to attend.

Successful applicants will be responsible for their own registration and travel arrangements. PARA will reimburse these resident physicians up to a maximum of $2000 for their expenses in accordance with the PARA Expense Policy.

Watch your monthly PARAscope or visit the PARA website for more information on these sponsorship opportunities.

Resident Physicians’ Experiences at the Canadian Conference on Medical Education

October 16-17, 2015
Winnipeg, Manitoba

I would like to thank PARA for sponsoring my attendance at the 2015 Canadian Conference on Physician Health (CCPH) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It was a very eye-opening experience to learn about the field of physician health and wellness and to witness the efforts from individuals and associations across the country that are active in bringing this issue to the forefront of medicine and medical education.

As a resident I particularly found the conversation around how physicians and learners declaring an illness, even as small as calling in sick with a cold, is often perceived as weakness and some of the things we can do as team members to help change these attitudes. I also found the sessions on “sustainable high performance” very useful as they offered excellent strategies to cope with the stress of needing to perform at a high level on a daily basis. I hope to be able to pass these techniques onto my fellow residents when the opportunity arises.

Enclosed is a picture of myself with keynote speaker Jennifer Botterill, who spoke about her experience in bringing this issue to the forefront of medicine and medical education.

With sincere thanks.

Dr. Benny Lee
Family Medicine Resident, PGY 1
University of Alberta

Dr. Aaron Trachtenberg
PGY 1 Internal Medicine
University of Calgary

I would like to thank PARA for allowing me to attend the Canadian Conference on Physician Health. I learned many things from this conference, particularly with regard to physician stress and burnout. As a profession, it is surprising how we are often better at taking care of our patients than we are at taking care of ourselves. When we are coping with crises, the last thing that we sacrifice is our work, and the first thing that is eliminated is often our personal well-being. I attended this conference in order to learn about ways to promote health among my fellow physicians.

There has been a relatively recent focus on depression and suicide particularly within the medical community. Every year, 300–400 physicians commit suicide in the United States. Canadian data is not available but an estimate of 30–40 would not be unreasonable. At the conference, we explored the various contributing issues that would lead to such tragic outcomes, as well as mitigating factors. Peer support was one of the core themes, whereby physicians can support each other in both a formal and informal way. Oftentimes, simply discussing your issues with a physician colleague is a good way to alleviate the situation. There was once a culture of silence and shame when it comes to self-disclosure, but times have changed and this is no longer the case. In the past, the medical community would often avoid discussing this sensitive topic, whereby physicians who are suffering will continue to do so under silence. There has been a recent systemic, structural overhaul in terms of how stress and burnout is perceived and managed. There are various provincial initiatives such as the Physician Health Program where you can contact a physician colleague at any time to discuss your concerns. As a resident, I paid particularly close attention to resources that are specifically intended for us. I learned at the conference that the Resident Doctors of Canada is creating a national, coordinated residency training program designed for residents. I looked forward to its implementation and wholeheartedly support this initiative.

I learned a significant amount from attending the Canadian Conference on Physician Health. It was definitely a rewarding and useful experience. I would like to thank PARA once again for their generosity in sponsoring my attendance.

Dr. Benny Lee
Family Medicine Resident, PGY 1
University of Alberta

As these resident physicians are spread throughout small towns and cities across Alberta, it is difficult for PARA to effectively schedule social and wellness events for them. To ensure that rural resident physicians still have access to PARA-supported activities, PARA has allocated funding for resident-initiated social and well-being activities for both Rural Alberta North and South. Funding is limited so apply now!

For more information on and guidelines for accessing this funding, visit the PARA website / For Members / Frequently Used Forms / PARA Forms.
Everyone has a story
...help write a different ending!

Seventh Annual PARA-dime

Help us help society’s less fortunate this winter. Fill the collection boxes with new and gently used clothing, toiletries, bus tickets and healthy non-perishable snacks.