

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Honouring our achievement award winners

In a special series of articles, *Alberta Doctors' Digest* would like to acknowledge some of our recent achievement award winners. We're going to start with the Medal for Distinguished Service.

The AMA Medal for Distinguished Service recognizes physicians who have made an outstanding personal contribution to the medical profession and to the people of Alberta and have contributed to the art and science of medicine while raising the standards of medical practice.

Dr. Cheryl Mack is a pediatric and adult cardiothoracic anesthesiologist with specialised training in pediatric palliative care and complex pain who has studied at the Universities of Manchester, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Regina.

She is a physician, a teacher, a mentor and a researcher of great skill and compassion. But what makes her extraordinary is her commitment to medical ethics and her unending service to the people of Alberta. In the past five years alone, she has served as the Chair of the Ethics Committee for several clinics and hospitals, including the Mazankowski Clinic, Kaye Clinic, WCM Health Science Center, and Stollery Hospitals (2012–2023), as Medical Lead for the Stollery Hospital (including dispute resolutions 2018–2023), Ethics Lead for University of Alberta Office of Global Surgery (2018–2022), Chair of the Canadian Anaesthesiology Society Ethics committee (2019–2021), Executive member and co-founder of the Canadian Anaesthesia society section for Environmental Sustainability (2018-2020), and Co-chair of the Opioid Poisoning Committee (2021– 2022).

She also served on the Provincial Practitioner Executive Committee and Council of Zonal Leaders. And she did all this work during very trying times – the COVID-19 pandemic, health care worker shortages, physician burnout, unprecedented patient care gaps and the drug overdose crisis peak.

Dr. Mack's colleagues refer to her as a physician champion. In her role as chair of the clinical ethics committee, Dr. Mack spent thousands of hours as a physician liaison, supporting the consultation service, doing research and giving presentations to colleagues.

Informally, she was always available to support learners and colleagues facing complex clinical questions or managing moral distress. Early in her career she worked with the Royal College Ethics and Equality Committee and the Caritas Hospitals Ethics Committee and was the Lead for the University of Alberta UGME ethics and law

curriculum. In her past role as the Chair of the Canadian Anaesthesiologists Society (CAS) Ethics committee, she helped craft position statements on the peri-operative status of DNR orders and other directives that limit interventions and on the ethical considerations of personal protective equipment (PPE) during scarcity.

She teaches with the John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre and the Canadian Bar Association Health Law Section and is active in citywide rounds, offering an ethics perspective on challenges faced by her colleagues. She has been an ethics presenter and collaborator at many conferences, both nationally and abroad.

And Dr. Mack doesn't just research ethics; she puts ethics into practice. Dr. Mack has tackled issues such as health care worker burnout, the opioid crisis and staffing shortages, even when doing so posed a risk to her own career. She has supported physician leaders facing unfair termination. She has led workshops to provide naloxone training and worked with students and young offenders. Dr. Mack is a teacher, a mentor and a passionate advocate for both physicians and the citizens we serve. And she also graciously acknowledges her own mentors: Dr. Paul Byrne, Dr. Brendan Leier and Dr. Eric Wasylenko.

We are very fortunate to have Dr. Mack serving Albertans.

For a complete list of our achievement award winners, [download here](#)

Banner image: Dr. Cheryl Mack (photo credit: Marvin Polis)