

# Alberta Doctors' Digest

## CMA Award for Young Leaders: Dr. Franco Rizzuti

In a special series of articles, *Alberta Doctors' Digest* is acknowledging some of Alberta's recent AMA and CMA award winners. This time, we're featuring the CMA Award for Young Leaders (Early Career).

The Award for Young Leaders recognizes physicians who have exemplary dedication, commitment and leadership in one of the following areas: political, clinical, educational, or research and community service. The 2023 award went to Dr. Franco Rizzuti, who exemplifies creativity, initiative and commitment to making a difference. He has been active and effective at the local, provincial and national levels, acting as a positive role model for his peers and colleagues.

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Dr. Franco Rizzuti is passionate, creative, innovative and above all, a leader. He recently received the CMA Award for Young Leaders, which recognized his outstanding achievements. His early career impacts include responding to COVID-19 by creating contact tracing response teams during the pandemic. His passion also leads him to support physicians through his ongoing work with the Canadian Association of Physicians with Disabilities.

Dr. Rizzuti's leadership journey started early on, even prior to medical school. He was involved with the University of Calgary Leadership Office and built curriculums to support other students as they embarked on their leadership journeys. Following his formative days in undergraduate school, he carried his passion into graduate school, medical school and beyond.



"That one idea, that one innovation, might be exactly what we need to transform a system, or at the very least, make a meaningful impact to the patients and to our colleagues."

- Dr. Franco Rizzuti

Dr. Franco Rizzuti

His leadership is impactful at the local, provincial and national levels. In medical school, he took on a leadership role as class president and then nationally with the Canadian Medical Student Conference. His commitment to building leadership skills continued as he served two terms as President of the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta.

Dr. Rizzuti explains that his professional journey is also a personal one. He was in a motor vehicle accident, which led him to his passion for supporting physicians and physician trainees with disabilities. “That’s a big passion of mine. I continue to do work with the Canadian Association of Physicians with Disabilities.”

Another important leadership opportunity he took on in his early career was his rapid learning and community response during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I had the fortune of training in the middle of a pandemic,” says Dr. Rizzuti. “So I had rapidly graduated responsibility, working with communities and supporting them as we adapted public health measures and adapted our recommendations to support their needs.”

Characteristics that undoubtedly stand out about Dr. Rizzuti are his creativity, commitment and initiative to continually make a difference in communities. He recounts the early days of the pandemic in 2020 when there were only a handful of manageable cases in Calgary. The situation changed very rapidly as Calgary became a hot spot in the province and capacity within the health care system became unmanageable. This is where Dr. Rizzuti’s innovative thinking came into play. He explains how in a short time – over a weekend – he worked with medical students to build a contact-tracing system and put it into action.

“Three hundred medical students over the course of the subsequent weeks trained to do contact tracing, and that group of medical students supported Alberta’s COVID contact-tracing response,” says Dr. Rizzuti. “For the first six weeks, it was just medical students with the supervision of residents and our medical officers of health — and that gave our health care team the capacity to ramp up and train.”

As Dr. Rizzuti reflects, he says, “It was a terrific opportunity – lots of learning, but to me what really stands out as a highlight of the pandemic was the ability to work with medical students, see how creative and adaptive they were and really just fill a gap for all Albertans.”

Dr. Rizzuti is a natural leader who commits his time to his passions and takes on leadership roles that build into new leadership roles. As he describes it, he’s in situations and sees opportunities for innovation and constantly looks at how to make things better. “I find that I’m taking that experience, that knowledge, and taking it to the next opportunity.”

Dr. Rizzuti is all about getting the right team together and learning and growing. His methods are to tackle one problem at a time while being creative with trying out new ideas – and having fun along the way.

He will truly be a strong provincial advocate throughout his medical career, which Dr. Rizzuti says is still evolving and unfolding. He's passionate about the complex health system and loves teaching medical students and residents. Dr. Rizzuti certainly brings his passion to the table and encourages others to bring ideas forward, even when only micro-changes are possible.

"Stay true to what keeps us going, to what our passions are," Dr. Rizzuti says, "because you never know – that one idea, that one innovation, might be exactly what we need to transform a system, or at the very least, make a meaningful impact to the patients and to our colleagues."

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