

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Exceptional physicians of Alberta

Welcome to the AMA's ongoing series about exceptional physicians in Alberta. What does that mean? It can mean physicians who have received awards or other recognition. Maybe it's all about the advocacy work they've done or their involvement with the Alberta Medical Association. It can also be about special projects and interesting passions. In any case, these are exceptional people, and we want to get to know them better.

This time around we're featuring Dr. Richard Bergstrom. He's an anesthesiologist in Edmonton who the Canadian Medical Association recently recognized with an Honorary Membership Award. The CMA Honorary Membership is granted to members who have distinguished themselves by their accomplishments in medicine, science, or the humanities or who have rendered significant services to the association.

Dr. Richard Bergstrom has been involved with the Alberta Medical Association for many years, including his role as president of the regional medical staff and president of the section that developed the [Relative Value Guide](#)

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/final-report-relative-value-guide-commission-of-alberta>

. He also provides education on what anesthesiologists do.

"I see my role as making sure people know just what we do as anesthesiologists, and that involves making sure they understand the risk we manage and the outcomes that we have."

Dr. Bergstrom says he's a quality advocate because quality speaks to not only what you do well but to decreasing error rates, which he says in turn dramatically improves care and decreases costs. "I promote the fact that work over the years has decreased error rates and made anesthesia not only safer for the general population, but actually much safer for those with significant risk."

So what drives Dr. Bergstrom as an advocate? He says it's all about meeting people within hospital administration and within the AMA. The people he has met have shown him that it's possible to contribute much more than just your job.

"What you can do is you can be a voice. Not shouting, but rather, stating," he says. "Advocacy is to me something that you continue to move forward so that you not only advance what you do, but what you do for other people. For we are a service industry, and we can get better."

As an advocate, Dr. Bergstrom wants to continually improve the profession. “What we do with good research is making sure that research touches the patients that need it. We can provide a better life, a longer life, and a more enjoyable life.”



“Advocacy is to me something that you continue to move forward so that you not only advance what you do, but what you do for other people.”

- Dr. Richard Bergstrom

“Certainly my job as an anesthesiologist is that of providing exceptional care, actually world class care, to people coming for surgery,” says Dr. Bergstrom. “But beyond that, as a physician, I do believe there is another role, and that is to not only provide advocacy for my patients but also to make sure that people know what physicians do and that we work *for* patients.”

Dr. Bergstrom describes his process of living his values and how he gets his message across to patients and colleagues. “In the operating room, you show everyone there, including the patient, that you are there for them. Your focus is not only on what you do, but making sure you do world class care. That involves pre-evaluation, your anesthetic, making sure they’re good in the recovery room, and also making sure that you listen to patients. You also listen to practitioners, and you encourage nurses and residents to be able to not want more, but want better.”

This exceptional physician clearly has a personal drive to continually improve what he does. He explains that it’s satisfying to spend a couple of minutes to help the patient understand that anesthesiologists are there to provide care the whole time they’re having surgery and to reassure the surgeons that they can focus on their work and not worry about anything that falls under the anesthesiologist’s role.

“Most importantly, if there’s a problem, it’s identified early and fixed,” he says. “Not only just doing what you do but engaging others in helping the patient get better.”

Dr. Bergstrom concludes that it’s a great privilege to be a physician.