

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Dr. John B. Kortbeek



Dr. Neil D.J. Cooper (L) and Dr. John B. Kortbeek (R). (Photo credit: Curtis Comeau).

Dr. John Kortbeek has been repeatedly honoured for his work as a teacher, as a surgeon and as a clinician in the areas of trauma, surgery and critical care. His career has been dedicated to the care of patients and their families, to continuously raising the standards of care in surgery, and to teaching and training young physicians and surgeons.

Dr. Kortbeek earned his medical degree from the University of Alberta, then completed a general surgery residency at the University of Calgary, where he has taught in the Faculty of Medicine since 1991. He has served as director of Trauma Services for the

Calgary General Hospital and the Calgary Health Region, as site director of Intensive Care, as chief of surgery for the Foothills Medical Centre, and as professor and head of the Department of Surgery for the Calgary Zone, Alberta Health Services, and the University of Calgary. He co-chaired the Provincial Surgery Network (now the Surgery Strategic Network) from its beginnings until 2016. Many professional organizations have benefited from his dedicated work, including a term as president of the Trauma Association of Canada and one as chair of the Advanced Trauma Life Support Committee, American College of Surgeons, and membership on the STARS Board of Directors.

He has led or co-led many improvements in the organization and processes of care in Alberta, including developing and implementing trauma center standards; establishing a trauma system with adult and pediatric tertiary trauma centers in Edmonton and Calgary and five provincial regional trauma centers; and introducing trauma system accreditation standards across Canada.

As president of the Trauma Association of Canada, he transformed it into a multidisciplinary/multiprofessional organization advancing both scientific enquiry and trauma system performance in Canada. As co-chair with Dr. Douglas Hedden of the Alberta Strategic Clinical Network, he developed and introduced standard care pathways and tools for raising the quality of surgical care in Alberta. His influence has been felt across the country – indeed, around the world. He served for 15 years on the Committee on Trauma of the American College of Surgeons, eventually becoming chair and then international director of the ACS Advanced Trauma Life Support subcommittee for eight years. During his tenure, the ATLS program and the COT introduced a number of changes to update the program, curriculum, policies and procedures. These changes helped ensure the ongoing success and promulgation of a program which has had tremendous impact on trauma care internationally. He has personally taught and lectured in over 30 countries.

As a teacher, Dr. Kortbeek has shone, receiving the Ectopic Award of Excellence for teaching internal medicine residents, the Teacher of the Year Award from the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta, and the U of C's Clerkship Teaching Award and Gold Star Award. He received the Centenary Award from the American College of Surgeons for direct participation as an instructor and/or course director in over 100 ATLS courses. He used his role as chair of the Department of Surgery to strengthen the educational mandate of the department during a time of expansion. He has successfully advocated for the inclusion of standardized trauma education as an accreditation standard for trauma centers in Canada, and is in demand as a visiting lecturer and professor across the country. He is now committed to overseas work to support the U of C's Global Health initiatives in Nepal and Laos.

Dr. Kortbeek has made an outstanding contribution to the medical profession and to the people of Alberta. His patients, his students, and his colleagues have benefited in countless ways from his passionate dedication.