

Alberta Doctors' Digest

AMA Long-Service Award



L to R: Michael A. Gormley, AMA Executive Director, Dr. Jeremy R. Beach, Dr. Lawrence R. Farries, Dr. Christopher J. Rudnisky, Dr. Michal S. (Mike) Kalisiak and Dr. Neil D.J. Cooper, AMA President. Missing: Dr. Catherine G. Flood, Dr. Peter D. Grundy, Dr. Lowell J. Van Zuiden and Dr. George O. Wood. (Photo credit: Curtis Comeau)

Dr. Jeremy R. Beach, Occupational Medicine, Edmonton

Of all the committees on which I've served, the most important role I've played is as a member of the Physician and Family Support Program Advisory Committee. The PFSP plays an invaluable role in assisting Alberta physicians with health problems, providing support at a difficult time. I am proud to have had the privilege of seeing this program in action (and possibly doing something to help) over a number of years.

I would like to think that the PFSP has continued to be seen as important by all Alberta physicians. Physician health is important to the functioning of the entire health care system, yet it receives little attention. In addition to the work PFSP does to support individual physicians, it also plays a key role in making people more aware of this issue.

Working with the AMA has introduced me to colleagues interested in providing support to physicians. This broad area is obviously bigger than physician health alone, and it is inspiring to see so many working to benefit their colleagues and the public. I would certainly encourage others to serve in this or another way and so to gain the benefit of a similarly collegiate environment.

Dr. Lawrence R. Farries, General Surgery, Red Deer

My time on the Fees Advisory Committee, first as a member and later as the chair, was extremely fulfilling and educational. I had the pleasure of working with many excellent AMA staff members, and I was also able to work with influential and inspiring physicians from many disciplines. We tried to apply a sense of proportion to the allocation of funds to new and revised fee codes, which was often difficult because of differing ideas about the importance and value of physician services across different sections.

Physicians have a responsibility to be expert at the cognitive and procedural aspects of our trade, but we also have corporate responsibilities to the profession as a whole. Some meet these responsibilities through teaching, or research, or administration, or oversight – but working with the AMA provides the opportunity to be engaged in a positive collaborative organization that works to move the entire body of practitioners forward.

Dr. Catherine G. Flood, Urogynecology, Edmonton

My most valuable experience with the AMA has been with the Health Issues Council, first as a member and then as chair, and the Emerging Leaders in Health Promotion Grant Program. I am proud of our advocacy work, especially regarding the introduction and expansion of the AMA Youth Run Club. It has been a privilege to help train our young physicians to develop advocacy projects and to see the results of these projects affect generations to come.

We are the AMA. I encourage all physicians to find a committee and start becoming more aware of what a great organization we are. Participating in committees in the AMA is a way to promote real change.

Dr. Peter D. Grundy, Endocrinology, Calgary

The work of the Representative Forum has been instrumental in advancing the profession in Alberta. Not every initiative has been successful (for example, the Relative Value Guide), but in general it has been satisfying to be involved in such a democratic and well-run organization. The more recent recognition of ARP- and AARP-funded physicians, and the work toward establishing appropriate representation for them, has been very gratifying.

The AMA is a very inclusive and interested body. It offers many opportunities to be personally involved if you are interested, and if there are issues of concern to you, the AMA is ready to listen and to explore them on your behalf. It is a truly democratic organization.

Dr. Michal S. (Mike) Kalisiak, Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery, Calgary

I have served as a Representative Forum delegate and on several AMA committees. My involvement with the Health Issues Council, with its focus on health promotion and disease prevention, was the most fulfilling. I have also been involved in various skin cancer prevention initiatives, especially in advocating for laws to protect minors from exposure to tanning beds. The AMA was always of tremendous help to us and, finally, less than a year ago, the Skin Cancer Prevention (Artificial Tanning) Act was proclaimed.

I also participated in the development and adjudication of the Emerging Leaders in Health Promotion Grant Program. It was rewarding to participate in jump-starting the many health promotion initiatives put forward by students and residents.

Serving in the AMA is not only a way of giving back but also an opportunity for learning through interacting with physicians from different disciplines and practice settings with different perspectives on how things can be done. AMA involvement allows for networking and learning how to navigate organized medicine, which are crucial for anyone trying to make a difference in how we deliver care to our patients.

Dr. Christopher J. Rudnisky, Ophthalmology, Edmonton

I am proud to have been one of the first committee members of the Governance Oversight Group, and to have been allowed to carry on as chair. I have also enjoyed my work on the AMA Physician Advocacy Group, the Section Bylaws Review Working Group, and the Representative Forum.

The GOG is evolving into a type of organizational ombudsman. Several sections have benefited from having GOG mediate disputes, and while I hope much mediation isn't needed, I also hope that this role becomes entrenched in AMA culture so we can improve our ability to work together. The Physician Advocacy Group has become a forum for providing tough feedback, and through that to germinate new ideas about how to deal with government. Those strategies only come out if there's conflict, but it's good to know there's a plan in place.

I've met many people I wouldn't otherwise have met, and I have learned a lot from them about how to communicate, how to collaborate, how to be part of a team. I've learned about politics, about conflict, and about how to overcome it. It's a whole new facet of medicine that has been rewarding in a different way than patient care.

Dr. Lowell J. Van Zuiden, Orthopedic Surgery, Calgary

Learning about the work done by the dedicated staff of the AMA on behalf of the physicians of Alberta has broadened my view of issues faced by colleagues. I have been involved with the Committee on Financial Audit for six years and was part of a subcommittee with a mandate to review the AMA employee pension plan, resulting in an improvement to it.

Understanding the AMA from the inside has helped in the development of our Alberta Hip and Knee Clinic in Calgary. The clinic has recently been recognized by the Accreditation Council of Canada as a thought leader providing an alternative care delivery process for patients with arthritis. The opportunity to use the experiences from my involvement with the AMA to enhance our patient experience at the clinic improved this alternative care delivery process. Alternative care delivery processes that integrate across the different silos (AHS, physicians, and community care) are an important part of providing better care for patients.

The physicians and AMA staff are quietly and effectively working in the background on behalf of Albertans and Alberta's physicians. Getting involved will enhance your perspective on patient care and the role of physicians in the system. Involvement in organizations like the AMA enhances "Fifth Discipline" thinking related to health care delivery.

Dr. George O. Wood, Pathology, Edmonton

(Personal reflections on service unavailable).

Dr. Wood is receiving the Long-Service Award in recognition of his contributions in various roles with the AMA. He is currently president of the Section of Laboratory Physicians, a Representative Forum delegate, a member of the Edmonton Zone Advisory Forum and an EZMSA Council member. He served nine years as co-chair of the Lab Grid Negotiations Committee and two years as co-chair of the Joint RHA/AMA Advisory Committee on Lab Physician Workplace Issues.