

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Resiliency training in rural Alberta

As students participating in the University of Calgary's Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship Program, Keely Bensted and I have been advocating for health and wellness among medical professionals in rural communities. In the short time we have lived in Sundre, we have successfully managed to integrate ourselves into the town and found a way to give back to the community. As we are both passionate about supporting wellness, we developed a plan to bring resiliency training to the staff at the Sundre Hospital and Care Centre.

I launched STRIVE: Simulated Training for Resilience in Various Environments program for medical students at the U of C in November 2017. The course includes training followed by simulations that focus on ethical dilemmas and challenging medical cases.

Working closely with Keely over the past six months, I witnessed her passion for emergency medicine and anesthesia, as seen through her ability to stay calm and thrive in stressful environments. I knew she was a perfect person to advocate on behalf of this course. Keely and I recognized a unique opportunity to expand the course to train medical professionals.



STRIVE includes simulations focusing on ethical dilemmas and challenging medical cases. (L to R) Dr. Rob Warren, Stephanie Smith, Keely Bensted and Dr. Bill Ward. Photo credit: Tayah McKenzie.

Fortunately Keely is no stranger to simulation. As a 2nd year medical student she co-lead the curriculum and training for the Student Run Simulation Team, a near-peer simulation teaching program that's the first of its kind in the country. Within this role, she assisted with the refinement and delivery of lectures to students, developed scenarios and facilitated simulations. Due to her medical education and simulation experience, and her previous project management experience as a professional engineer, Keely was an obvious choice for instructor training. Together, we have been able to conduct STRIVE

courses for numerous staff to help build healthier, more resilient health care professionals.

Both of our preceptors, Drs. Bill Ward and Rob Warren, were extremely supportive and made the course possible by being simulation facilitators. Bill's over 30 years of medical experience working in the UK and Rob's previous life as an advanced-care paramedic provided extensive knowledge and expertise, which added valuable insight to the rural implementation of STRIVE. Through the support of the CMA, the CFMS now offers STRIVE to medical students across the country. We believe that with initiatives like this, training in remote locations will be a reasonable outcome in the future.

We recently taught two STRIVE courses for the Sundre nurses, doctors and lab/X-ray techs, plus one course for 35 first-year medical students at the U of C. This is all done to combat the increasing number of students exhibiting signs of burnout, depression and suicidal ideation. We hope to expand the training to hospital staff in Rocky Mountain House and Olds within the coming months.

We are enthusiastic and optimistic that we can pave the way for future students to continue the legacy toward health and wellness. We recognize the challenges associated with a career in health care and are committed to keeping health care professionals prepared for the inherent stresses it presents.

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