

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Shine A Light: Dr. Sayeh Zielke

Have a heart: Lethbridge physician champions improved cardiac treatment for residents

As the sole cardiologist serving Lethbridge, Dr. Sayeh Zielke maintains a daunting clinical schedule. She is also a tireless advocate for bringing much-needed cardiac catheterization services to the community.

Currently, Lethbridge-area cardiac patients requiring this treatment must make the two-hour trek to Calgary, creating a strain on patients and their families. “Often these patients are older, and it’s hard for them to be away from home,” says Dr. Zielke. “Having a cath lab here would alleviate that stress, elevate the calibre of cardiac services we can offer and help us recruit other cardiologists.”

Hopeful but realistic: Call for cath labs

Over the past two years, Dr. Zielke has worked closely with Alberta Health Services and clinicians to explore the creation of additional cath labs. An [AHS report released last October](#) concluded both Red Deer and Lethbridge have enough demand, but it stopped short of making formal recommendations.

“We know we have robust cardio rehab services, a good imaging program and the physical space for a cath lab, but it’s a very expensive venture,” explains Dr. Zielke. “We’re hopeful, but realistic.”

Also included in the AHS report was an emphasis on cardiac prevention, an issue that is near and dear to Dr. Zielke.



“Patients asked me, ‘What can I do other than meds,’ so I started writing, and it just took off.”

Dr. Sayeh Zielke, Lethbridge

Dr. Sayeh Zielke, Lethbridge (Photo credit: Jodi O Photography)

Backing it up with a book

“Anecdotally, we know there are more prevalent lifestyle-related cardiac issues in southern Alberta,” she says. With that in mind, Dr. Zielke has written a book about non-medical ways to achieve healthy blood pressure. Released in early 2019, [One Heart, Five Habits](#) began as a brochure for patients. “Patients asked me, ‘What can I do other than meds,’ so I started writing, and it just took off.”

Whether advocating for a cath lab or helping people understand prevention, Dr. Zielke considers the chance to make a difference in the lives of her patients a blessing. “I’m so grateful to do what I do.... It’s more than a career; it’s a calling. How lucky am I to have this opportunity?”

Introducing ... Dr. Sayeh Zielke

Years in practice

Five

Why medicine?

I just wanted to be able to help people in a significant way. I grew up always wanting to be a doctor. I thought the heart was such a cool organ, with mechanical parts, electrical parts, etc. I found the field fascinating and challenging. I’ve had wonderful mentors along the way who encouraged this path.

Mantra/philosophy of life

When it comes to work, this is not a job. It’s a calling and a privilege.

About Shine A Light

Initiated by Dr. Alison Clarke during her 2018-19 term as AMA President, *Shine A Light* recognizes and profiles AMA member physicians who are making a difference by:

- Spearheading projects that improve patient and/or community life
- Diligently following/tracking patients to ensure coordinated care
- Working long hours and adjusting schedules to meet patient needs
- Contributing to Alberta’s vision of a high-performing health care system

Do you know a physician who goes above and beyond to care for his/her patients? If yes, please [complete this nomination form](#).

Shine A Light: Saying “Thanks!”

Mr. R.M. Ico, a former long-time Calgary resident, emailed the AMA – prior to moving to Kamloops, BC – to express his gratitude for the exemplary medical care he and his wife

received from Dr. David (deceased) and, for many subsequent years, from Dr. David's physician son, Dr. Oliver David. Mr. Ico also thanked Dr. Katie Wiltshire (neurologist, South Health Campus) and Dr. Parekh (cardiologist) for their thoughtful and informed care over the years.
