

Alberta Doctors' Digest

The power of fitness for women in medicine

If you are a woman, from Calgary and in medicine, you might have been one of enthusiastic participants who got together to celebrate the Fitness in Medicine Retreat 2017 (pictured above).

What does a Fitness in Medicine Retreat look like? Well, it's a moment for women of all ages, training levels and interests to get together to support, motivate and inspire one another, while getting a little bit sweaty of course.

The weekend started with each of us reflecting on what health means to us and what a healthy version of ourselves looks like. With that in mind, we started moving. A few workouts and a movement fundamentals class got us off on the right foot, followed by lunch and nutrition talks leading into an afternoon of yoga and the opportunity for a manicure and massage.

Day two started off with obstacle course racing, lunch and mentorship talks followed by a workout, an interactive meditation session on yoga and a closing mindful yoga practice.

Sport and athletics have been a part of my entire life, most recently competing in obstacle course racing and crossfit. And for those of you who know me, there's no doubt I practice what I preach. The retreat weekend is all about women getting together to share and support one another. It is a unique opportunity for all levels, from first-year medical students to mid-career practicing physicians, to try new things. We talked about personal goals and achieving balance in a medical life. We mentored the doctors of tomorrow by sharing the ways we keep life perspective amongst the busyness of career, friends and family.

It is so rewarding to hear the women talk about how they approach different aspects of medicine and learn from one another. The environment of physical fitness breaks down barriers, so information flows freely. There is even some research behind exercise and learning retention!



There is no question in my mind that a healthier you brings a better physician and better care to our patients. (Photo: unsplash.com)

In this setting everyone gets to experience different types of sport and movement in a safe and well-run environment. The highlight of the weekend? For me, it's seeing the interaction, mentorship and professionalism amongst the women. When these are modelled in a fun and challenging environment, I really believe women give each other strength to make the next best move as we transition on this journey of life.

My favorite activity? Obstacle racing of course! It is so satisfying to watch as people destroy the limiting beliefs of what they physically can do. It empowers us to challenge the limitations we place on ourselves in the rest of our lives too.

All in all, the 2017 retreat was a *huge* success, with a lot of inspiration, laughter and learning – not just about fitness, movement and nutrition, but about life. It built the foundation for strong relationships that many will carry forward as we all try to be the best we can. And there is no question in my mind that a healthier you brings a better physician and better care to our patients.

The biggest take away for me from an organizational standpoint: when you put amazing people in a room together, amazing things happen and we can all learn from one another.

Will we hold the retreat again? Plans are already in motion for Retreat 2018 along with regular Fitness in Medicine activities. In the meantime: What are you doing today to keep yourself fit and healthy?