

Alberta Doctors' Digest

AMA Member Emeritus Awards



(L to R): Dr. Alison Clarke (President, AMA), Dr. Neil Cooper, Dr. Linda Slocombe, Dr. Michael Caffaro, Dr. Darryl LaBuick and Mike Gormley (Executive Director, AMA). Not present: Dr. Christopher (Chip) Doig. (Photo credit: Bryan Cooper of Cooper & O'Hara Photography)

The Member Emeritus award recognizes significant contributions to the goals and aims of the AMA, seniority, long-term membership and distinguished service (20 years) based on criteria determined by the Board of Directors. Members Emeriti enjoy all the rights and privileges of a full member, but shall not be required to pay annual dues.

Dr. Neil D.J. Cooper

Pediatrics, Calgary

REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE: Relationships have highlighted my time in AMA service – with AMA staff, with medical leaders and with AMA members. Our organization continues to be a model for all the Provincial and Territorial Medical Associations in the country as we collaboratively take on difficult issues. Working to bring together many disparate opinions into a common understanding has been the greatest challenge, but also the most rewarding part of my work with the AMA. I have enjoyed every committee I have served on.

As president, I hope that I was able to communicate effectively with members, especially when it came to describing our approach to physician compensation. I am proud of the work our AMA Compensation Committee has done over the years.

I have always said that I like the way the AMA does its business. We have a great system where grassroots members can express their thoughts and ideas through their section leadership and then have them acted on by the organization. You have only to express interest in order to start contributing. It's extremely rewarding to become involved in the AMA and to have the opportunity to serve with amazing thought leaders who believe in making the system better for our patients and in helping each other improve the way we practise medicine.

PERSONAL INTERESTS: I spend much of my free time volunteering for Dreams Take Flight, as Medical Director, on the executive and as the chief IT geek. I am proudest of all that my entire family has joined with me in volunteering to make a difference in the lives of thousands of Dream Children.

Dr. Linda M. Slocombe

Family Medicine and Low-Risk Obstetrics, Calgary

REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE: Alberta is a wonderful place to practise medicine, and my involvement with the AMA has helped make my journey rewarding. I remember my first Representative Forum, where the collegiality and professionalism – and the fun – were apparent from the start. I had no choice but to stay involved with an organization that was there for all Alberta physicians and their patients. As a member of the Board, I realized the complexities of representing all Alberta doctors. My term as AMA president was a highlight of my career and challenged me to develop skills I didn't know I had. Most recently, being one of the AMA representatives on the CMA Board has been an extraordinary experience.

During my term as president we were faced with difficult negotiations and provincial elections. We were able to stay unified as a profession and not back down despite attempts to discredit our profession. My time on the Physician Compensation Committee, working alongside my specialty colleagues, helped to begin the long process of working together towards income equity.

My experience of AMA service has been invaluable in my career. It has opened doors I did not know were there, created lifelong friendships and kept me proud to be an Alberta physician. The culture of successful organizations comes from the top, and we have the best in the country

PERSONAL INTERESTS: The practice of medicine and my work with the AMA have been the greatest part of my life. I enjoy walking my dog Charlie, and when I do have free time in the future I will pursue my passion for birdwatching and my ultimate goal of living in flip flops.

Dr. Michael J. Caffaro

Medical Administration, Edmonton (formerly family medicine, Hinton)

REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE: I had some outstanding experiences serving the Association – the Fees Advisory Committee, the Relative Value Guide working group (when I was called the “young fellow at the end of the table”) and the Board of Directors. Most gratifying was my time at the Representative Forum representing both the Section of Rural Medicine and the physicians of West Yellowhead, during a time of tremendous – and still unfinished – change in health care and the AMA. I worked with smart, hard-working, dedicated professionals whose selflessness and collective wisdom seem increasingly rare in our society.

Professionalism is under pressure – some would say attack. Physicians must continue doing what is right, even when it's hard and nobody's watching.

During my more than two decades of medical practice in Hinton, I thought I had the best job in the world. I looked forward to going to the office and hospital every day, and the

occasional tough experiences were far outweighed by the good ones. My staff and I laughed every day, and I never regretted the path I chose.

PERSONAL INTERESTS: Hinton was a wonderful place both to start married life and to raise a family. My decision to leave in 2015 and return to Edmonton was significantly based on the expected needs of aging parents and in-laws. Alongside my shepherding of those I love into their final years, I have had the chance to build a new garden with my wife Victoria and continue to cycle extensively around this wonderful city. The Edmonton I returned to after more than two decades away is now blessed with significantly greater opportunities for craft beer sampling, perhaps the only other hobby I can afford while I gently release three children into the adult world via postsecondary education.

Dr. Darryl D. LaBuick

Family Medicine, St. Albert

REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE: I have had the privilege of serving the AMA as Board member, AMA President, AMA Representative to the CMA Board, Chair of Council of Zonal Leaders, Negotiating Committee, Deputy Speaker and Speaker for the AMA Representative Forum and most recently as President of the Section of General Practice. I am honoured to have had the opportunity to participate in so many roles and to interact with so many talented, spirited people.

As a Board member, I supported the establishment of the primary care networks, and I was the founding president of our local St. Albert and Sturgeon PCN. As president in a negotiating year, I worked on the Rural, Remote, Northern Program and the now-defunct Retention Benefit Program, which helped keep physicians practising despite tremendous resource shortages.

As physicians, our responsibility for patients goes beyond the bedside and the clinic. Patients look to us to advocate for their care and for the system as a whole. We are privileged to be leaders and advocates for them.

Taking on leadership roles has allowed me to interact with physicians and leaders who have offered me knowledge and wisdom in patient care and health system challenges. The demands of the practice of medicine these days have isolated physicians. The roles I have played have inspired in me a higher sense of collegiality and a greater understanding of the challenges we face.

PERSONAL INTERESTS: In addition to my full-time family practice, I remain passionate about advocating for underserved Seniors Care in my role as Medical Director at the Youville Home in St. Albert. In my spare time, I keep my life simple, spending cherished time with family and hitting golf balls into forests and water followed by a torrent of choice words and thrown clubs.

Dr. Christopher J. (Chip) Doig

Critical Care Medicine, Calgary

REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE: I am grateful to have served on RF and the Board, and as an officer of the association. As I said when I was installed as president, primary care is the heart, spine, muscle and more of the health care system. I hope that my contributions have demonstrated a commitment as a specialist to recognizing the importance of primary care physicians in our system.

The profession of medicine is a large corpus with different parts that serve vital functions – front-line clinicians, researchers, teachers and those who serve in regulatory structures such as the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA). I hope new physicians recognize the privilege of being a member of this profession and of caring for members of our community; know that the profession as a whole benefits from playing their role in the body; and remember that “Patients First” shouldn’t be a catch phrase, but a daily guiding principle. We must live the words on the CMA coat of arms: *Integritate et Misericordia* (integrity and compassion).

PERSONAL INTERESTS: I am a passionate skier, cyclist, swimmer and soccer player. I love to play in the mountains with my family. My boys now fly down the ski hill and wait for dad at the bottom. A more expensive bike than my kids have gives me a slight advantage on the trails in summer. I love to dive into the pool and put in a few laps. I am now ranked second in my family in our annual Golden Boot competition (for the person who scores the most goals in their respective soccer leagues) – but, alas, only because the competition now is just between me and my daughter, Pele. I’m lucky to be healthy and enveloped by the love of my family.