

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Alberta medical students focus on personal and peer health and wellness

As organizers of the 16th Annual Alberta Medical Students' Conference and Retreat, we are immensely proud of the work done by our passionate and dedicated committee. With the help of the Alberta Medical Association and our other sponsors, we were able to successfully bring together 280 Alberta medical students on the weekend of January 24-26 in beautiful Banff, to promote personal care and wellness in a fun and exciting conference.

This event provided students from across the province an opportunity to interact, network and develop professional relationships early on in their medical training. With several sessions centered on financial management, clinical skills, peer-support, yoga, art therapy and meditation, AMSCAR promotes the skills necessary leading to healthier lives as medical professionals. AMSCAR 2020 was an unforgettable experience that even included time for skiing, snowboarding and exploration of the wonderful Banff town center.

The AMA is a proud sponsor of AMSCAR. AMA President, Dr. Christine Molnar, gave the lunchtime keynote address at the conference and spoke to attendees about her inspiring journey in medicine. Dr. Molnar's story emphasized the importance of overcoming difficulty, to look to our successes, and to reach for opportunities that we are offered. Dr. Verna Yiu, President and CEO, Alberta Health Services, spoke at the gala dinner about the importance of resilience in medical school and beyond.

Medical students in their third and fourth year score higher on indices of anxiety and depression compared to students just entering, who score on par with the general public. Medical students have busy schedules and often overlook their own self-care. In addition, there is the continued stigma associated with seeking help from peers or the program. This in turn manifests as apathy, decreased professionalism and burnout.

Feedback from students has illustrated that AMSCAR positively impacted their wellness. We hope that students have learned some wellness and self-reflection skills that they can take with them into their future practice. We hope AMSCAR is a starting point for us to put more emphasis on wellness and self-care.