

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Recapping the Alberta Medical Students' Conference and Retreat (AMSCAR) 2022

Taking place on January 21 and 22, 2022, the 18th annual Alberta Medical Students' Conference and Retreat (AMSCAR) was held virtually over Zoom for the second time in its history. While initial hopes were for an in-person component to the event, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic once again warranted a change of plans. Despite this, the organizers created a well orchestrated weekend of learning and fun that allowed for an enjoyable virtual experience. There was a total of 246 students (179 medical students from the University of Alberta and 67 from the University of Calgary) who came together for a weekend of health and wellness – an especially important topic given the current climate.

Prior to the event, all those who registered were able to pick up packages on campus that included a high-quality suturing kit, the option of Stoggles (stylish, protective eyewear) or a handy white coat clipboard, a Door Dash gift card and painting supplies.

The first night of the event commenced with a presentation by Dr. Katherine Smart, the current CMA president. Participants were then divided into assigned breakout activity rooms, either Barre Fitness class or watercolour painting. I participated in the watercolour painting activity which was quite enjoyable and relaxing, and the paintings produced by some of my fellow attendees were impressive. The final event of the night was a mix-and-mingle followed by a competitive, heart-racing scavenger hunt. For me, that was fun and exhausting! I ran up and down my stairs numerous times trying to collect items in the time limit provided. Unfortunately, my efforts did not equate to prize-winning.



Practising on the suture kit

The next day was jam-packed with presentations and events, commencing with AMA President, Dr. Vesta Michelle Warren, as the morning speaker. There were three clinical skills events that students were able to attend throughout the day at specified times; suturing, back country splinting and emergency first aid. I attended the emergency first aid and suturing skills sessions which were educational, interesting, and allowed for some hands-on practice.

There were five wellness sessions that students could choose from: mind and meditation, how to build workouts, preventing tech neck and other postural mishaps, facing performance anxiety and finance 101. These sessions were all led by professionals in each of the fields who offered great insights relating to personal and financial health. The sponsorship fair provided a space where students could learn more about the different organizations that sponsored AMSCAR and what they had to offer students. A clerkship panel session was held with current third and fourth year students, and residents at various training stages, who were available to answer students' burning questions and provide some hope and insight. The event was rounded off with a virtual dinner and trivia night.

As an attendee, the effort and planning of this event was noted and greatly appreciated. It can be difficult to create such a large-scale event virtually, especially during a time where Zoom fatigue has become a constant and unfavourable feeling. Regardless, AMSCAR provided an opportunity for medical students across Alberta to meet, learn something new, have fun together and hopefully forget about some of their current stressors. It was a well-coordinated event and I commend the organizers on doing a wonderful job. Looking forward to an in-person event next year (hopefully)!

Banner image credit: Florian Pircher pixabay.com