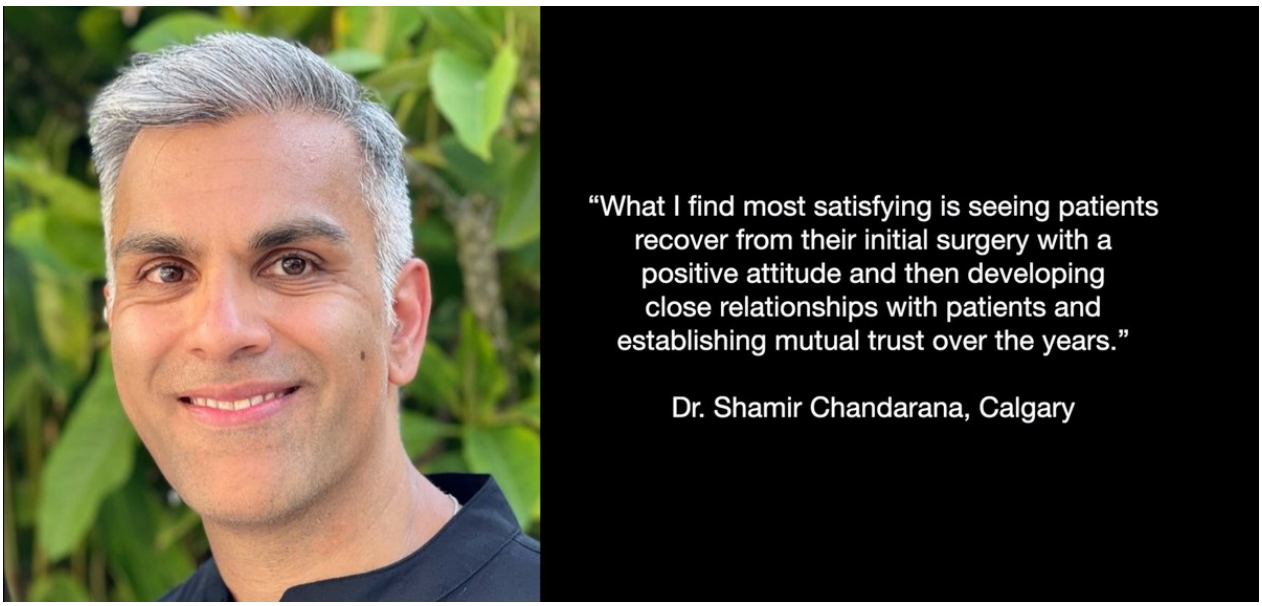
Alberta Doctors' Digest

A light shines for cancer patients

Physicians are used to providing the care, so when the physician becomes the patient, they have a unique perspective on the health care system and those working within it.

Recently, a physician found herself battling thyroid cancer and was referred to Dr. Shamir Chandarana, a surgeon with the section of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery (U of C), for treatment. While the patient wishes to maintain her privacy, she was compelled to ensure Dr. Chandarana was recognized through the Shine a Light Recognition Program for the excellent care he provided.



Dr. Shamir Chandarana, Calgary

Here are some excerpts from the patient's nomination letter

"*Dr. Chandarana is skilled at his work as he has performed a complex surgery with utmost diligence, precision and competence. Not only is his technical knowledge commendable, his kind and empathic bedside manner really is the icing on top. He has always taken the time to listen, provided his professional opinion, been open to hearing my thoughts, showed empathy in my situation and treated me like I matter. He brings humanness in surgery by relating at the level of the patient."*

"Dr. Chandarana explained the risks and benefits of the surgery he performed and then followed up closely, addressing things as they came along. He was diligent in setting up follow up and physiotherapy post surgery and did not rush me out despite the capacity pressures in our overburdened health care system. He adjusted his schedule to provide

me with care that best suited my needs. Dr. Chandarana put me before anything else and that's what made all the difference for me. He embodies the attributes of a great physician – an empathic communicator, an advocate, a leader, a collaborator, and a medical expert."

The patient did not receive special treatment just because she was a physician. In fact, she had a similar surgery before, and her experience was nothing like this more recent surgery. This competent and compassionate way of treating patients is simply Dr. Chandarana's way.

"*Dr. Chandarana has regained my trust in surgery. He went above and beyond what would be expected of a great physician. Not only that, he communicated with my husband all along my journey and ensured that we as a family were on the same page. He answered questions and handled fears and concerns of my family with utmost respect. Dr. Chandarana has been a hero not just for me but for my family as well. What he delivered is a real-life example of patient and family-centered care."*

"*If there is a list of people that have made a difference in my life, Dr. Chandarana will make it to the top of that list! A big thank you to him for providing me with outstanding care and that too with such integrity, diligence and respect. I am forever grateful!"*

We wanted to know more about Dr. Chandarana - here is what he had to say

How long have you been practicing medicine?

I'm in my 12th year of practice.

Why did you choose to focus your practice on head and neck surgery?

The structures of the head and neck provide the basis for important daily functions for patients. These include speaking, swallowing, smelling, hearing and facial expression. As such, diseases that affect the head and neck can have a significant negative impact on patient quality of life, as well as their ability to function in society. I was always drawn to head and neck surgery because of the complexity of the anatomy and the ability to treat patients' conditions while preserving these important daily functions as much as possible. There has been significant growth and innovation within the field and, specifically, when it comes to the surgeries performed. I find this exciting and, ultimately, this has led to improved patient outcomes.

What do you find most satisfying about your work?

What I find most satisfying is seeing patients recover from their initial surgery with a positive attitude and then developing close relationships with patients and establishing mutual trust over the years. We are fortunate in that many patients are able to survive their initial diagnosis and also maintain a good quality of life.

About the Shine a Light Program

The Shine a Light Program 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