

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Shine A Light: Dr. Cecile Phan

Dr. Cecile Phan is an associate clinical professor with the Division of Neurology at the U of A. She goes above and beyond for both her patients and colleagues, providing quality care to patients and support to physicians.

The extra efforts Dr. Phan makes have not gone unnoticed; she was nominated by a colleague who admires her dedication to her work.

Here is her nomination letter:

"Dr. Phan is an unbelievably hardworking and diligent neurologist. In clinic, she goes above and beyond for her patients. She will spend a great deal of time after her clinic is finished to ensure that cases and orders are properly reviewed. I have witnessed her calling multiple specialists to acquire imaging and special investigations for her patients, which can sometimes take a great deal of tenacity and patience. She is extremely knowledgeable and has much clinical experience which she applies to every single patient.



"Communicating and helping patients understand the various aspects of their disease, which can be difficult for a lay person to fully grasp, is such an important cornerstone of the therapeutic relationship."

- Dr. Cecile Phan

Dr. Cecile Phan

She is an admirable colleague to work alongside. During her neurology hospital service sessions, she takes a highly collaborative approach as team leader, which I believe benefits her team and her patients' care. She is very organized and ensures she reviews the hospital charts of each of her patients very thoroughly. This provides her with insight into their medical challenges and allows her to identify important clinical contexts that others have often overlooked, which results in better patient care.

She also helps run a specialist multidisciplinary neuromuscular clinic, which longitudinally follows neurology patients. This clinic is very important for continuity of care for patients with complex medical comorbidities and aids in quality of care by ensuring the changing needs of these patients are consistently reviewed. It can be difficult to coordinate multiple specialists for a single clinic day, but Dr. Phan is dedicated to ensuring this clinic runs smoothly.

Even though Dr Phan works tirelessly in her job, she advocates for self-care for her physician colleagues. This is an often under recognized area but a very important aspect for physicians to identify and promote among themselves. By ensuring physician self-care is respected, it reduces the risk of burn-out, allows for improved patient care, and provides a more robust health care system.”

We wanted to learn more about Dr. Phan and her work. Here is what she had to say:

How long have you been practicing medicine?

I've been practicing since 2011.

Why did you choose to focus your practice on neurology?

I love neurology because of its complexity and diversity of diseases that can affect both the central and peripheral nervous system. I remember one statement in my letter of intent to CARMS residency application many years ago, which still stands true today, is the similarity between solving a neurological problem to solving a jigsaw puzzle. Painstaking details are required from history taking, to physical examination, to synthesizing the details in order to arrive at the correct diagnosis. As a neuromuscular specialist I enjoy seeing all types of diseases affecting the peripheral nervous system, but I am particularly interested in muscle disorders and neuromuscular pathology.

What do you find most satisfying about your work?

I really enjoy seeing complex neuromuscular cases from the time of diagnosis to treatment and management. I find that communicating and helping patients understanding the various aspects of their disease which can be difficult for a lay person to fully grasp is such an important cornerstone of the therapeutic relationship.

About Shine A Light

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