

## Walking on snow(shine)

Health students from the University of Alberta snowshoe across Thunder Lake as part of the RhPAP Health Skills Weekend in Barrhead in March 2019.



**New Pincher Creek A&R committee says thanks to local health-care heroes at inaugural event**  
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**Boot-camp style ultrasound course kicks training into high gear**  
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## Enhanced Surgical Skills in Rural Alberta

RhPAP is focused on supporting Enhanced Surgical Skills (ESS) training in Alberta.

*Read more about this new initiative on page 12.*

## Find out more about RhPAP's Board of Directors

What makes someone dedicate their time to helping rural Albertans keep health care close to home? Find out more about each of our amazing directors in the video profiles on our website at [rhpap.ca/about/board-of-directors](http://rhpap.ca/about/board-of-directors)

## Working together to keep health care close to home

### Update from the Board Chair

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Rural Health Professions Action Plain, I offer my sincerest congratulations to Premier Jason Kenney and the United Conservative Party on their election victory of April 17, 2019.

It has been our privilege for the past quarter-century to work alongside the proud and resourceful people of rural Alberta, as well as present and future rural health professionals, to build and maintain healthy communities.



I offer my sincerest congratulations to Premier Jason Kenney and the United Conservative Party on their election victory of April 17, 2019.

We are grateful for this opportunity, and we look forward to working alongside your government with the common goal of ensuring access to health-care services close to home.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. WARREN".

**Dr. Rob Warren**

## Add yourself to the Rural Voice

### Update from the Executive Director

Spring is in the air, and the transition to the new season is underway throughout rural Alberta.

A transition is also underway in Edmonton following the election of a new provincial government.

RhPAP is a non-partisan, apolitical, non-profit organization, and we have valued the strong relationships that we've enjoyed with all administrations since our inception in 1991.

However, it is clear by the voting results that many rural Albertans are hoping that a UCP government will be able to meet their health-care expectations.

With this in mind—and given our role to advise key stakeholders within the health-care sector—we would love to hear directly from you on the health-care improvements you would like to see over the coming four years of this UCP government.



We have developed a provincial platform for rural communities to make their voices heard on health-related matters – the Rural Voice Information Panel or Rural VIP.

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Within the coming weeks, we will be launching our initial survey. The answers our VIPs provide to the survey questions will inform our discussions with the newly-elected provincial government on issues related to rural health care. Be sure to join the Rural VIP Panel today, and we will share your feedback, ideas, and concerns with provincial decision makers, policy developers, and leaders. To become a member of the Rural VIP panel, visit [www.rhpap.ca/ruralVIP](http://www.rhpap.ca/ruralVIP).

We look forward to a positive and productive relationship with the provincial government that helps ensure quality health care and service delivery for rural Albertans.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard C. Anderson".

**Bernard C. Anderson**



## Send us your rural locum experiences

Are you a physician who currently provides rural locum coverage or who has done so in the past? RhPAP wants to hear from you! We are researching the factors that are significant in rural locum practice, and we are speaking with physicians to learn about their firsthand locum experiences. Your input will help us support locum physician attraction and retention in rural Alberta.

Thanks to all those who have already participated in our recent survey on locum physicians. We received many responses, and your feedback helped us learn more about locum physician engagement in rural communities. Congratulations to the draw winner, Paula from Cold Lake, who received an RhPAP travel bag filled with other RhPAP prizes for completing the survey!

Find out more at [rhpap.ca/rurallocum](http://rhpap.ca/rurallocum) 

## Mobilizing the Village: RhPAP launches Rural Community Building Webinar series

In cooperation with the Campus for Communities of the Future, a social enterprise developed by Brenda Herchmer, RhPAP has launched a rural community building webinar series for rural leaders who want to make a difference in their communities.

Over the next two months, registrants will take part in seven 1-1.5 hr. webinars on Monday mornings, covering the following topics:

1. Introduction to Community Building
2. The Increasing Relevance and Importance of Being Community-Driven
3. Supporting Individual and Community Change
4. Tools for Enhancing Community Leadership
5. Outcome-Focused Leadership
6. Measuring Impact: Evaluation Basics
7. Essentials for Engaging and Empowering Citizens and Volunteers

Two face-to-face workshops will be part of this series and will occur May 7 (Beaverlodge) and May 9 (Three Hills). Registrants are able to attend the workshops in-person, or do the session via webinar. The face-to-face workshops will also be opened up to other A&R committee members. Registered participants have the choice of completing a certification option or attending sessions only.

For more information, visit [rhpap.ca/rhpaplearning](http://rhpap.ca/rhpaplearning) 

## Dr. Sarah Makhdoom joins RhPAP board

RhPAP welcomes Dr. Sarah Makhdoom, a family physician from High River, as the newest member of its board of directors.

Dr. Makhdoom has practised in High River, Alberta since 2003, when she moved there with her family after graduating from the Rural Alberta South Family Medicine Residency Program at the University of Calgary. Originally from Pakistan, Dr. Makhdoom was used to the hustle and bustle of crowds, but now prefers her quiet walks in rural Alberta.

Looking after her patients from cradle-to-grave in a traditional family practice that includes hospital and obstetrics work is her life-long passion. She is excited to join RhPAP and to be involved in the development of rural health and well-being on a larger scale.

# New Pincher Creek committee says thanks to local health-care heroes at inaugural event

Article & Photos: Britton Leddingham

The warmth of a chinook breeze welcomed Pincher Creek and area residents as they gathered on January 13 to say “thank you” to their local health professions.

Dozens of health practitioners and interested locals gathered at the Pincher Creek Royal Canadian Legion on Sunday, January 13, 2019 for a Health Professionals Appreciation Event.

While attendees mixed and mingled and enjoyed a few snacks, country artist Ryan Lindsay engaged the crowd in some original and cover tunes, courtesy of the newly-formed Pincher Creek Health Professions Attraction and Retention (A & R) Committee.

Town councillor, Scott Korbett, says that the A & R committee hopes to address the struggles a small town has with finding doctors, nurses and other health-care workers.

“We hope that by formalizing [forming a committee]...we can actually help our health-care professionals attract people to this community and keep them here,” said Korbett.

According to Korbett, the committee will also serve as a resource for local health practitioners.

“[Health workers] don’t need to wonder who to talk to,” said Korbett. “You come and see us, and we’ll help you through it, and we’ll do everything we can to make everything work out for everybody.”

Events like this demonstrate that appreciation is at the heart of the A & R committee.

“We do value what we have, and we’re not oblivious to just how good we’ve got it,” said Korbett.

The committee members have a vested interest in local health care.

Maggie Olson, a retired registered nurse, is one of those who will bring many years of health care expertise to the committee.

“I hope that I can be an asset to the committee, to the community again, and to the people,” said Olson.

Current RN Stacey Kettles is encouraged by what she sees.

“I feel supported in large by the community and by other agencies in town,” said the local nurse of 20 years. “But it’s nice to have it pulled together under one roof. It’s good to know that people care about the caregivers.”

Health-care aid Dixie Millar hopes this is just the beginning of great things.

“I hope that they continue it and get more people involved” said Millar. “The more people involved, the more you can get done.” 📌

## Meet Anne-Marie Piccinin, RhPAP’s new Administrative Assistant

I am delighted to join the RhPAP team. As Administrative Assistant, I will be at the reception area providing administrative support to the RhPAP team, and, likely, will be the first one you see when you come to our office. I look forward to greeting you with a smile, and connecting you with who you’ve come to see.

Previously, I worked for the Ministry of Health, for a number of years, as an Administrative Assistant, until my second child was born, and, then, I was fortunate enough to take some time off to raise my two sons.

I was born and raised in Edmonton, but enjoy getting out of the city during summer and spending time at our cabin at Fork Lake, which is two-and-a-half hours NW of Edmonton.

— Anne-Marie Piccinin



# Introducing the RhPAP Attraction and Retention Toolkit



Does your community need help keeping health care close to home?

The RhPAP Attraction and Retention (A&R) Committee Toolkit offers support and resources for rural Alberta communities involved in the attraction and retention of health professionals to their geographical areas.

The toolkit features five distinct modules focused on the main areas of rural community attraction and retention committee involvement. Each module includes hands-on, practical strategies and tools that have been shown to be successful in attraction and retention of health professionals at the rural community level. Included in the toolkit are also a list of other resources which may prove valuable to rural community committees.

To find out more about the RhPAP Attraction & Retention A&R Toolkit, contact RhPAP at [consultants@rhpap.ca](mailto:consultants@rhpap.ca) 



## RhPAP is here to support Alberta's rural physicians

### Enriching Your Skills

RhPAP supports skills development for rural health professionals. Rural physicians can access funding to upgrade existing skills or gain new skills in order to meet the medical needs of their community.

RhPAP offers a number of programs, including:

- A customizable **Enrichment Training Program** to assist physicians training in rural or regional communities in courses up to one year long
- **Emergency Medicine Enrichment (EME)** and **General Emergency Medical Skills (GEMS)** courses
- Various **continuing medical education** and **continuous professional learning (CME/CPL)** opportunities

### Finding You a Place to Live

RhPAP's Accommodations Program provides resident physicians and nursing students with a place to call home while experiencing life and career opportunities in rural communities.

### Coordinating Locum Relief

RhPAP supports AMA Physician Locum Services® by providing short-term locum coverage to rural physicians practicing in communities with four or fewer physicians.

### An Opportunity to Give Back

RhPAP's Mentorship Program is an excellent way to promote your practice and community to students considering working in rural Alberta. You get to pick the time and dates that work for you and RhPAP will take care of the rest.

For more information on these opportunities, visit [rhpap.ca/physicians](http://rhpap.ca/physicians)



## Alberta Rural Health Week

May 27-31 is Alberta Rural Health Week. Alberta Rural Health Week celebrates the contributions of rural Alberta-based community members and health professionals to the quality of life in rural Alberta.

- Highlight the local heroes who keep health care close to home!
- Follow RhPAP on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube at @AlbertaRhPAP
- Post a picture of your local health-care heroes on social media and add the tag #RuralHealthMatters

For more information on how to celebrate and appreciate the contributions of rural Albertans who help keep health care close to home visit [ruralhealthweek.ab.ca](http://ruralhealthweek.ab.ca) 



RhPAP Board Chair Dr. Rob Warren speaks at the Rhapsody Awards celebration in Drayton Valley.



Dr. Tom Phillips was joined by wife, Lynne, at a recent event in Spirit River, where the community celebrated the physician's 47 years of service to his community. Over 400 community members came out to show their appreciation for "Dr. Tom".



RhPAP Executive Director, Bernard C. Anderson, was presented with a framed copy of the Alberta Family Physician Electronic Endoscopy study by Dr. Michael Kolber, the study's lead author, in recognition of RhPAP's support for this vital research on colonoscopies performed by rural Alberta family physicians



A new medical clinic opened in the Village of Delburne on March 8, 2019.



Dr. Pieter DeWet was recognized for 20 years of service in the Smoky River area on March 1, 2019.

## Your Opinion Matters

We want to know how we can do better to serve rural Alberta. There are a number of ways you can connect with us:

- Send an email
- Contact our Leadership Team
- Send a message to @AlbertaRhPAP on Social Media

If there is currently something you feel is not working, please let us know what that is, and how you feel we could improve. If you have any ideas that RhPAP can build upon within the context of our mandate, please share.

Your opinion really does matter.



The 2018 Rhapsody Community Award was presented to the Pembina Physician Recruitment & Retention Committee, Drayton Valley and Brazeau County

# Emergency training course fosters respect and understanding between fellow providers

## Two-day training focuses on rural health-care scenarios

Article: Lorena Franchuk / Photographs: Dean Lack

Realistic emergency scenarios, mixed with a little humour, have physicians, nurses, and paramedics sharing a new respect for one another's roles following a course on rural health-care emergency training.

The Comprehensive Approaches to Rural Emergencies (CARE) course was delivered to about 48 health-care providers in Brooks and Rocky Mountain House earlier this year. CARE, which was developed by British Columbia physicians, Rebecca Lindley and Jel Coward, brings doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other health-care workers together in an effort to promote teamwork.

Participants ranging from medical students to long-term health professionals took part in the intensive two-day course, which features scenario training in medical, trauma, and obstetric emergency management, with no testing at the end.

The Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) funds four CARE courses annually throughout Alberta for communities with a population under 15,000.

**“The instructors made it a relaxing, low pressure atmosphere where you weren't worried about saying something silly.”**

— Dr. Dotun Ajibade

Becky Brown has seen a lot of emergencies during her four-decade tenure as a registered nurse (RN) in Brooks. Seeing first-hand what the paramedics do before they arrive at the hospital really opened Brown's eyes to the challenges they face in an uncontrolled environment.

“It's always easy to see what was not done,” said Brown, noting she'll now have a better grasp of why something like an intravenous drip possibly wasn't started before arriving at the hospital.

During the pre-reading, licenced practical nurse, Jordan Watt was concerned the days would be filled with long lectures. “We didn't sit at all,” she said. Instead, the 10-hour days were filled actively participating in applicable simulations and gave the Rocky Mountain House team an opportunity to bond.

Dr. Dotun Ajibade, who has worked as physician in Brooks over the past year, recalled one aspect of the course where participants went outside in frigid temperatures to treat a patient.

“You are like, ‘whoa,’ in those scenarios as a doctor. You kind of feel helpless because this is not my comfort zone at all.”

While used to dealing with emergencies in the ER, Ajibade is typically backed by colleagues, tools, and equipment, and even security support if need be.

“Normally, [paramedics] bring in the patients and you never see what they do out in the field,” he said. “I'm better able to understand the limitations of the paramedic ... and I'm also able to see they are capable of a lot of things I probably didn't give them credit for.”

Cody Frenette, a primary care paramedic based out of Nordegg, appreciated the opportunity to hone his skills while building relationships.

The course emphasized there are different ways to approach various emergencies and the discussions afterwards were always positive and non-judgmental.

“It was an amazing experience and well worth my time,” Frenette said. The course and encouragement from other participants has prompted him to pursue higher education in health care.





Health professionals learn about intubation at a CARE Course in Brooks

Everyone appreciated the humour woven throughout the sessions, and participants praised facilitators for their ability to keep everyone engaged despite the full days.

“You want to do the right thing — give the right drugs and make the right decisions,” noted Ajibade.

“The instructors made it a relaxing, low pressure atmosphere where you weren’t worried about saying something silly.”

One simulation where a male doctor played a pregnant woman (yes that’s correct!) without prenatal care and, unknowingly carrying twins, was memorable.

“That was just so funny it was a highlight,” said Maggie Gamble, a licensed practical nurse (LPN) who works at the Brooks Health Centre.

Another powerful moment for Gamble was being able to use the cardiac defibrillator. “As an LPN, I am seldom ever able to touch it because it’s one

Practising emergency situations involving children was very helpful, said paramedic Belle Clark. While fortunately rare, they do create higher stress for health-care professionals and the procedures can vary from that of an adult.

RN Amanda Paradis appreciated learning on the same level as other health-care providers such as physicians and paramedics.

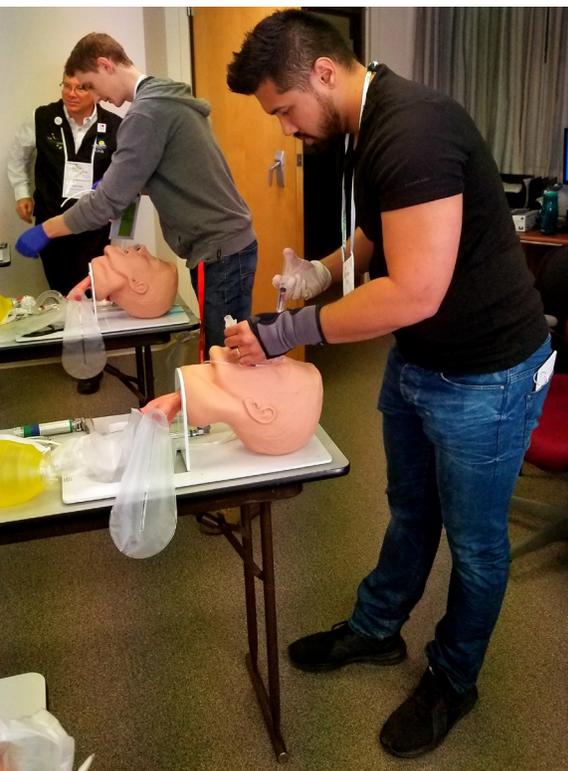
“We’re often taught by the physicians or [take] nursing courses. Seeing [physicians] vulnerable in the sense that they are learning new things too changed the team dynamic. Often they are the leader and you take their direction.”

Rocky Mountain House physician, Kim Rogers, touted the benefits of hands-on experience with simulations on airway management, head injuries, paediatric, obstetric, and cardiac cases.

“It was a fantastic course and very well facilitated. We could see what each other’s strengths were ... and fill in the gaps. The teamwork was a huge portion of what we learned from the course.”

As Becky Brown discovered, the two-day training reinforced there is always more to learn.

“A lot of times, when courses are offered, you sign up hoping you are going to learn something,” Brown added. “I didn’t feel intimidated at all. In fact, it empowered me [to know] that I had the knowledge. It actually gave everybody opportunities to shine. 🏠



**“This was probably the best course I’ve had in my 44 years of nursing.”**

— Becky Brown

of the things that is out of our scope. Regardless, everybody should know how to use it because there will come a time when you need to know more than you are able to do.”

Another takeaway many have now adapted into their routines is the 20-second review. The quick recap — called for by any member of the health-care team during treatment — ensures everyone knows what is going on at a particular interval, details what’s completed and what the plan is to come.

Third-year University of Calgary medical student, Rebecca Pham, said she’s more confident to deal with emergencies now even if she’s faced with limited resources.

“I haven’t been too involved in the more serious cases that come in. It was so good to see with this (Rocky Mountain House) group they were so well-oiled and knew what they were doing.”

# 54 post-secondary health care students experience a fun-filled skills weekend in Peace River

Article & Photographs: Bobby Jones

Have you ever jumped on the “Bouncy Pillow”?

Over 50 post-secondary health-care students had the opportunity to do just that during an RhPAP Skills Weekend in Peace River.

A big focus of this event was getting a good feel for the local area. So, students were kept busy bouncing from one fun activity to the next.

Students toured the Lavoie Dairy Farm, where about 350 Holstein cows get milked twice a day. They visited an Air Ambulance hangar where two planes are stationed to transport local patients to hospitals in larger centres, often Edmonton.

They also went to the local museum where they discovered the role the mighty Peace River played in the fur trade, and learned the story of “Twelve-foot Davis”: The legendary Henry Fuller Davis. While Davis was nowhere near 12-feet tall, his nickname comes from a small 12-foot mining claim that Davis had near here in the mid-1800s, where he found \$500,000 in gold (today’s value).

Students toured the Peace River Community Health Centre. This hospital serves a large catchment area in Northern Alberta, with patients coming from as far as two hours away. There’s an operating room, cardiac stress testing, and each year about 400 babies are delivered here.

Another major focus of a skills weekend is learning hands-on medical skills. In Peace River, skill stations included casting, IV starts, Stars mobile education unit, obstetrics, suturing, and EMS.

**“It’s been an absolute blast to come up here”**  
— Jesse Grist



**Dr. Kylan McAskile attended three RhPAP Skills Weekends as a student. In Peace River, he gave back by teaching intubation.**

Peace River physician, Dr. Kylan McAskile, taught intubation. He’s no stranger to a skills weekend, having attended three of them when he was a medical student at the University of Calgary.

“It feels nice to be able to give back to med students,” says Dr. McAskile. “And show them [that] what we do up here is really challenging and [it’s a] rewarding place to practise.”



Over at the suturing station, Dr. Annie Hutchison, a resident physician in Peace River, was also giving back. A few years ago, she attended a skills event in High Level as a medical student.

“When they told me they were putting on this weekend and they asked to see if I was around to help out, I was super excited. It’s really neat to go back and teach people those things,” says Dr. Hutchison.

The community hosted a dinner for the students where they heard local professionals share reasons why they love working and living in Peace River.

“It’s so cool to come to Peace River where I’ve never been before,” says Julie Munich, who is in second year Medicine at the University of Alberta. “It’s really fun to meet the community and see how much the community’s come together to show us how amazing it is here.”

“It’s been an absolute blast to come up here,” says Jesse Grist, a second year medical student at the University of Alberta. “It’s something that we definitely need the exposure to.”

The busy RhPAP Skills Weekend finished at a viewpoint overlooking the Peace River. It was one last chance to celebrate new friendships, pose for a group photo, and leave with a better vision of what rural health care is really like. 🏡

# Smoky River Skills Weekend encourages students to “think rural”

Article & Photographs: Alicia Fox

Future health professionals discovered a unique gem tucked away in northern Alberta: a group of Francophone communities passionate about enhancing rural medicine.

The communities of McLennan, Donnelly, Girouxville, and Falher within the Municipal District of Smoky River hosted a bilingual RHPAP Health-care Skills Weekend.

More than 20 medical and nursing students from Calgary, Edmonton, and Grande Prairie participated in the event, practising or learning new skills such as casting, suturing, placement of IVs, and emergency response at Sacred Heart Health Care Centre in McLennan, known locally as the McLennan Hospital.

Barbara Mader, site manager for the McLennan Hospital, gave the students a tour of the facilities, and pointed out some of the amenities including surgical suites for their endoscopy program, decontamination rooms for on-site equipment sterilization, an emergency room, long-term care suites, and 20 acute care beds.

“Being a small town hospital, we have to deal with everything that comes through our doors,” Mader said.

Once the tour was complete, students spent their Saturday in a rotation of classes with doctors, nurses, and emergency responders from the area as well as STARS flight nurse Chris LaRose.

Myrna Lanctot, coordinator for the Smoky River Regional Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee, says they jumped at the opportunity to showcase the Smoky River area, and to highlight how health-care professionals can thrive both personally and professionally in a rural environment.

“Rural life can be a great work-life balance, but it can also be very challenging, so [health practitioners] can put their skills to the biggest test likely in the rural areas,” Lanctot said.

Laura Sevick, a medical student at the University of Calgary, said she came to the skills event to experience a part of Alberta she had never been to, saying the event “really changed [her] outlook”.

“I really appreciated speaking with one of the doctors, and them explaining the huge scope of their practice,” Sevick said.

**“Keep an open mind about rural. It’s a very rewarding place to work.”** — Linda Desaulniers

Nicholas Hitti, a bilingual nursing student at the University of Alberta Faculté St. Jean, said he particularly enjoyed putting on and taking off a cast.

“It was a really empathetic experience to feel what fear a patient might have,” he said.

Hitti said that while he had definitely thought about the possibility of working rurally it was not something he fully understood.

“I think coming here and being able to see this environment, it really helped me realize what rural life was – what rural nursing was,” he said.

When they were not in class, the students experienced some of what the communities had to offer, including a family dance in McLennan, a scavenger hunt in Donnelly, and a community turkey dinner in Falher, followed by a paint night.

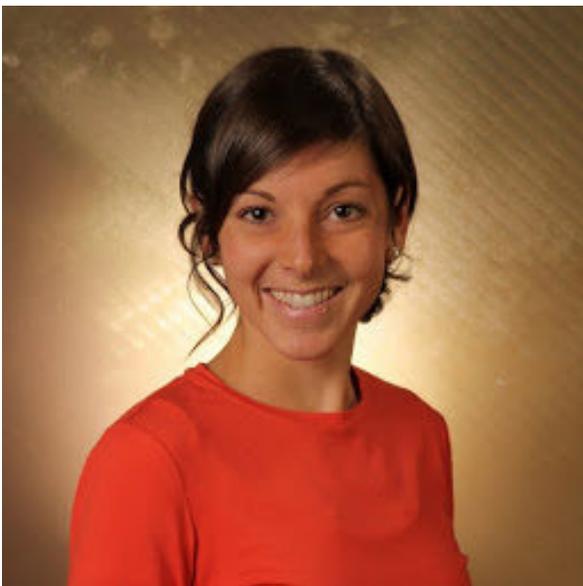


On Sunday, the students visited Black Sheep Farm and Berube Family Farms, learning about animal care and management, greenhouse production, local crops, and grain drying.

At each of these events, the group of students – all of whom were bilingual – enjoyed hearing presentations in both French and English.

As the students headed home, the instructors and organizers hoped they would take away new skills, but also a renewed possibility for adventures beyond the city.

“Keep an open mind about rural,” suggested Linda Desaulniers, clinical nurse educator for the AHS North Zone. “It’s a very rewarding place to work.”



Dr. Audrée Bédard (top) and Dr. Jared Van Bussel (bottom),  
RhPAP's Regional Advisors,  
Physician Policy Enhancing Rural Skills

**“My involvement with RhPAP originated from a desire to create relationships between surgical providers, encourage conversations and consultations.”**

— Dr. Audrée Bédard

# Enhanced Surgical Skills in rural Alberta

## Q&A with Dr. Audrée Bédard and Dr. Jared Van Bussel

Family physicians who offer enhanced surgical skills (ESS) are vital to rural Alberta communities. Rural GPs who can perform enhanced surgeries like appendectomies and caesarean deliveries provide rural and remote residents with greater access to life-saving health-care services, and enhance the ability of rural communities to attract rural health practitioners.

However, maintaining a high level of medical competency in these skills also comes with great geographic, professional, and financial challenges. Since its inception, RhPAP has offered Skills Enrichment programming to assist physicians in rural or regional communities to upgrade existing skills, or gain new skills, in order to meet the medical needs of their community or its surrounding areas.

RhPAP also partners with the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (SRPC) to offer the Enhanced Surgical Skills Program in Banff, Alberta. This one-day course updates rural ESS physicians with current methods, facilitates informal communication, and encourages family physician-specialist networks. Starting in 2018, a dedicated program stream for rural Alberta OR nurses was established.

In 2018, RhPAP welcomed two rural Alberta physicians to the team to help promote and support Enhanced Surgical Skills training in rural Alberta communities. We interviewed Dr. Jared Van Bussel, a family physician in Pincher Creek, Alberta, and Dr. Audrée Bédard, a family physician in Peace River, Alberta, to learn more about their involvement in with RhPAP and Enhanced Surgical Skills (ESS).

**RhPAP:** Tell us a little bit about yourselves, and how you became involved with RhPAP and ESS.

**VAN BUSSEL:** I grew up in Strathmore, Alberta and later spent a few years there early in my career, and practised with the low-risk maternity group in High River. I have also spent some time doing locums for various rural communities across the province. I gained an interest in maternity care and labour and delivery, which partly guided my interest in Pincher Creek due to their dedication to full-practice family medicine. In my pursuit of this shared goal, I obtained training in Enhanced Surgical Skills in Prince Albert, SK in 2012-2013.

At that time, I recognized the need for caesarean section to support labour and delivery. However, I did not fully understand the complex environment surrounding the training, certification, privileging, and practice of enhanced skills in Alberta.

**BÉDARD:** I am originally from Quebec and moved to Western Canada in 2013 for the start of a Family Medicine Residency with UBC, after which I pursued additional surgical training in Prince Albert, SK.

During my limited experience in practice, I have been fortunate to find great support from colleagues and specialists in regional centres. Despite the local and regional support, there were times where being the sole surgical provider in the area brought on an uncomfortable sense of isolation.

**RhPAP:** *What is enhanced surgical skills (ESS)?*

**VAN BUSSEL:** ESS is a certification in family medicine which recognizes a skillset that is beyond what would be typical for a graduate of a family medicine program. Currently, there are a few programs that add on to the training a family physician may already have to allow them to practise a defined small subset of surgical procedures. The purpose is to support caesarean section capabilities in regions that cannot maintain a call roster of specialty surgeons. Some physicians are only trained in obstetrical operative skills – sometimes defined as OSS or ESS-OB, and sometimes they may round out a call schedule along with specialty surgeons.

Additional procedures may provide more operating time for surgeons who may otherwise only be in the OR for emergency procedures, and are complementary to reinforce similar skills in the OR, as well as to maintain a high-functioning interdisciplinary OR team. This local access may help avoid the need for for resident from smaller communities to travel to access these services. Other common surgical skills are hernia repair, appendectomy, carpal tunnel and trigger finger releases, endoscopy – both gastroscopy and colonoscopy, dilation and curettage, and tonsillectomy, among others.

**RhPAP:** *How is RhPAP involved with with ESS, and what is your role?*

**VAN BUSSEL:** RhPAP has recognized that labour and delivery, and the supports needed to sustain it, are essential to rural communities, rural health practitioners, and rural physicians.

ESS is currently a young training program in Canada, as most of our rural physicians with the ability to do a caesarean section have trained abroad. It needs advocacy to thrive, especially as it often escapes the view from urban-based decision-makers. My role as a RAPPER is to find avenues for that support, and advise based on my experience where might be the greatest need for these supports.

**BÉDARD:** My involvement with RhPAP originated from a desire to create relationships between surgical providers, encourage conversations and consultations. There are a lot of parties at play when considering the provision of obstetrical and surgical care in a rural area.

**RhPAP:** *What is the focus moving forward?*

**VAN BUSSEL:** In our first year, we have focused on information gathering. Looking to our neighbors in BC where they have started to build networks between rural ESS practitioners and their referral centres and established some clinical coaching relationships. We are looking to what would be needed to replicate some of their successes.

We have made connections with the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary for what their needs are for training ESS physicians, and what could be provided for continuing medical education for these practitioners. We have also found that there has been no rigorous approach to determine the location, or number of ESS physicians, or the breadth of their practice in the province of Alberta by any of our partners.

In our second year, we hope to make forward movement on establishing pilot programs for clinical coaching. We also need to support a network of ESS practitioners, which will require us to build a database of communities that perform caesarean sections, and the health practitioners with the skills needed to support those communities. We would also like to support the ongoing educational needs of these practitioners.

**RhPAP:** *How do rural health-care providers get involved?*

**VAN BUSSEL:** Let us know what supports we can provide to help you do your job better. I know the difficulties I face in my own community, but many of you may have faced those difficulties before and have solutions you can share. By nature of our work in rural communities, we may be isolated – and as practitioners with additional skills, you may be isolated from your colleagues. Please contact us at [ess@rhpap.ca](mailto:ess@rhpap.ca) if there are opportunities to support your practice or if you have ideas or would like to help with any of our strategies. 📧

#### References

Iglesias, Stuart, et al. "Joint position paper on rural surgery and operative delivery." Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine 20.4 (2015): 129-139.

**“My role as a RAPPER is to find avenues for that support, and advise based on my experience where might be the greatest need for these supports.”**

— Dr. Jared Van Bussel



## Boot-camp style ultrasound course kicks training into high gear

Article & Photos: Alicia Fox

A group of doctors from southern Alberta are ready to put their newfound ultrasound skills to good use.

On October 12 and 13, RhPAP sponsored the popular Emergency Department Echo (EDE, pronounced “Eddie”) Course in Claresholm, a community nestled on the border of the foothills between Calgary and Lethbridge.

There were 17 physicians and one physician’s assistant who arrived at the Claresholm Aquatic Centre where eleven beds, six EDE instructors, and dozens of local volunteer patients awaited them.

With a variety of local volunteer patients to work with throughout the weekend, the first day focused on review and direct teaching of course material that the participants had already read online, while the second day was eight hours of scan time offered in a “boot-camp” structure. Each doctor was given six minutes on the clock to get in as many approved scans as he or she could before handing the probe to the next participant.

By the end of the second course day, participants had the opportunity to check off close to half their 50 required scans, which must be supervised by a doctor with Canadian Point of Care Ultrasound Society (CPoCUS) certification. Two additional days will be held on February 1 and 2, 2019 to allow the participants to complete CPoCUS certification requirements.

“This is a phenomenal opportunity for learning,” said EDE Course instructor, Dr. Kish Lyster. “I can’t say enough how happy I was today at the end of the course.”

Dr. Roisin Dempsey, local organizer and family physician in Claresholm, said she was inspired to bring the EDE Course to her hometown after hearing positive feedback from friends who had taken the course elsewhere.

With limited access to diagnostics in smaller centres, Dempsey said she wanted to utilize the equipment they had, including a point-of-care ultrasound machine, and ensure they were giving their patients the best possible care.

“That’s the overall goal, to improve our patient care in rural medicine,” Dempsey said.

Participant Dr. Patrick Bailey, a family physician from Carstairs, said he feels the skills he learned will give him peace of mind when examining patients, enabling him to rule out serious injuries such as inter-abdominal bleeding after blunt trauma, confirming an intrauterine pregnancy, or checking for fluid in the abdomen.

Dr. Reid Hosford, a family physician and anesthesiologist from Pincher Creek, said the point-of-care ultrasound will help rural doctors manage their patients through better diagnostics and help during conversations with specialists. He appreciated how he could attend such a quality course so close to home.

“I know lots of other doctors who are traveling across multiple provinces or across the country to get this ultrasound training,” said Dr. Hosford. “I think more and more physicians are realizing this is a very important tool, and it is almost becoming standard of care in a lot of areas.”

... Article continues on page 15

“I think more and more physicians are realizing this is a very important tool, and it is almost becoming standard of care in a lot of areas.”

— Dr. Reid Hosford  
Participant



... Boot-camp article continued

One of the most challenging aspects of the job, according to Claresholm's Dr. Scott Smith, is diagnosing the underlying cause of undifferentiated pain, and ultrasound can help with that.

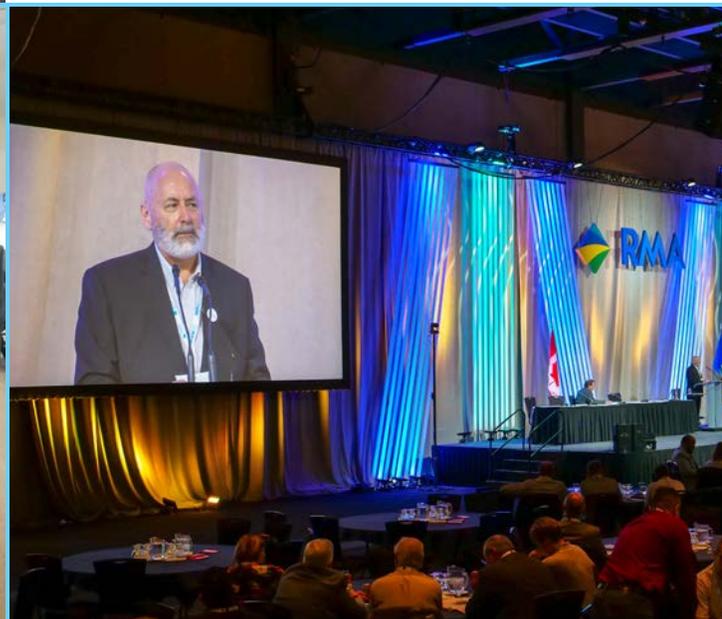
"I think as we get better at it, as we implement this ... we can just make sure the patient is getting the care they need," Smith said.

Participating doctors came from eight communities, including Banff, Carstairs, Claresholm, Milk River, Pincher Creek, Taber, Standoff, and Vulcan.

After Dempsey put out the call for community volunteers, every slot for both the Friday and Saturday sessions were full within two days.

"Huge kudos out to the local team and the local community for rallying around this cause and coming out to volunteer," Lyster said.

RhPAP is looking forward to bringing this course to as many as six more communities in the coming months and already connecting with other rural doctors who could benefit from training such as this. 📄



Carolyn Sedlowsky (left), FCSS Manager for Thorhild County and Jared Friesen, Director of Stakeholder Affairs for the Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta and RhPAP's Rebekah Seidel and Bernard Anderson.

## Presenting to the rural municipalities

From March 18-20, 2019, RhPAP attended the Rural Municipalities of Alberta's (RMA) Spring 2019 Convention & Trade Show. On March 19, Executive Director, Bernard Anderson, and Rural Community Development and Engagement Director, Rebekah Seidel, presented at a plenary session to the entire delegation, and at a breakout panel discussion with the County of Thorhild and the Nurse Practitioner Association of Alberta.

## Download our presentations

Curious about what was said at the RMA conference? RhPAP has made its two presentations available for download. The presentations, **RhPAP's Recipe for Rural Success: A mix of collaboration, capacity building, and passion** and **Building Community Capacity: RhPAP's Rural Community Development and Engagement Program** can be accessed at [rhpap.ca/rhpapRMA](http://rhpap.ca/rhpapRMA) 📄

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## Learning about the sweet life

Bilingual nursing students from the University of Alberta's Faculté St. Jean, medic students from the University of Calgary, and one Grande Prairie Regional College student pose under the Fahler bee as part of the RhPAP Smoky River Health Skills Weekend.

## About / Alberta Rural Health Quarterly

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Issues of the Quarterly are also free to download from the RhPAP website, [rhpap.ca](http://rhpap.ca) > [resources](#).

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