

Recipients of Dr. Chirag Shah International Resident Award

2025

Postgraduate Medical Education is pleased to announce the winners of the Dr. Chirag Shah International Resident award. The \$2,000 award was established in 2012 by Dr. Shah to assist international medical graduates who are adjusting to life in Canada and to inspire them to give back to their community and contribute to making Canada a better place.



Dr. Jennifer Garcia

PGY1 Family Medicine

I was born and raised in the Philippines in an urban-poor environment. Thankfully my parents valued the importance of quality education and dedicated their lives to providing myself and my siblings the best education they could afford. However, the prevailing corruption in our government along with rising criminality made life unsustainable, hence the decision to leave my home country ridden with guilt for not trying hard enough.

My own journey to residency took more than a decade. Along the way I endeavored to make life meaningful and productive, despite disappointments and setbacks. I found ways to support my community, specially during the trying times of the pandemic when physicians were subjected to unfounded mistrust. Participation in mobile vaccine clinics across the city, outreach to hard hit areas and Indigenous communities, as well as conducting lectures to improve health literacy among refugees provided a sense of fulfillment. Throughout all this I have been in the company of hundreds of fellow IMGs who all worked in solidarity with the genuine sense of duty and without hesitation despite real risks to their own health and safety. Bearing witness to this strengthened my determination to continue advocating for my colleagues and supporting them in their own journeys. Through my leadership roles in AIMGA (Alberta International Medical Graduate Association), Clinical Assistants Section- AMA, and currently as IMG Representative in the PARA Assembly I continue to raise awareness and participate in discussions to bring about positive changes that will create equitable, inclusive environments that will ultimately benefit our healthcare system. Being a minority, IMGs go through residency with unique experiences, often subjected to biases and prejudices leading to self-doubt. As the incoming IMG Lead Resident for Family Medicine, I realize the huge responsibility of representing my cohort and I hope to serve in our best interest to help everyone succeed in residency and beyond. This work extends to the vulnerable racialized youth from migrant families who likewise suffer dilemmas with their identity and culture.

I pursued residency because I knew I have much more to contribute to the community. The need for primary care is urgent, specially in rural areas where access and resources are scarce. I have witnessed firsthand the dedication and advocacy of Family Doctors serving a tight-knit community in Rural Southern Alberta. It is astonishing to see the discrepancy of resources and supports afforded to these outstanding physicians who are committed to provide excellent care that hardy rural Albertans deserve. The extra year of training in Enhanced Surgical Skills will enable me to offer comprehensive care that will support the surgical needs of our rural folks and enable me to take part in this advocacy.

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A deep commitment to equity and inclusion in healthcare has guided my journey to residency at the University of Calgary. During my medical training, I collaborated with physicians in remote community outreach programs, where I witnessed the transformative impact of accessible and



Dr. Madiha Durrani
Family Medicine

culturally sensitive care. These experiences inspired my pursuit of Family Medicine. After graduation, I practiced in Pakistan, Dubai, and Glasgow, providing general and specialist care to diverse populations. As a multilingual physician, I could connect with patients across cultural and linguistic barriers, managing acute and chronic conditions in hospital and clinical settings. These roles have prepared me to contribute meaningfully to your residency program and the broader Canadian healthcare system.

Since settling in Calgary, I have actively engaged in community service to support local populations. For over eight years, I have volunteered with Autism Calgary, where I collaborated with multidisciplinary teams to provide tailored support to individuals and families. This experience deepened my appreciation for non-verbal communication and the importance of customized care. Additionally, I have worked as a clinical assistant with family physicians, internal medicine specialists, an endocrinologist, and a cardiologist, gaining valuable insight into the Canadian healthcare landscape. My involvement at multiple Calgary health expos allowed me to educate the community on women's and children's health, mental health, and emergency response techniques. Demonstrating life-saving interventions such as CPR and managing acute emergencies earned me an Achievement Award, further motivating my dedication to community engagement.

Looking ahead, my goal is to continue delivering patient-centered care through shared decision making, advocacy, and health promotion. I am committed to addressing systemic barriers to healthcare and providing long-term, preventative medical care to underserved populations. I have also translated multiple podcasts for COVID-19 vaccine support in different languages. To enhance my effectiveness, I have written four books to create awareness on various topics including Ophthalmology, Autism, diabetes, and cancer, and I completed three research courses including the Applied Clinical Research course at McMaster University. I also actively engage in public speaking to raise awareness of critical health issues, which I plan to expand upon in my future practice

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My journey to residency has been deeply shaped by diverse experiences in medicine, both in my home country of Egypt and here in Canada, where I have fully integrated into the healthcare system. After completing my M.B.B.Ch. and training across various disciplines, I practiced as a general practitioner in



Dr. Reham Kamel
PGY2 Family Medicine

both urban and underserved areas in Egypt. The opportunity to contribute to healthcare in rural and urban contexts taught me the importance of accessibility and preventive care—principles that resonate with my current focus in Family Medicine.

Since beginning my residency at the University of Calgary, I have been dedicated to contributing to the community in meaningful ways. I am actively involved in the Resident Wellness and BIPOC Committees, where I support initiatives aimed at improving physician wellness and fostering an inclusive environment. In addition, my volunteer work in Calgary includes facilitating health education for my colleagues as a PBSG facilitator. I am passionate about connecting with the local population and building rapport with patients from diverse backgrounds, and I strive to advocate for accessible, patient-centered care within Calgary's healthcare landscape.

Looking ahead, I aim to develop as a well-rounded family physician who serves urban, rural and underserved populations across Alberta. My goal is to continue advancing patient-centered care, particularly for vulnerable groups, and to make a positive impact through preventive health and education. In the long term, I envision myself leading initiatives that support the healthcare and improve health equity for underserved communities.