



PARA

Professional Association of
Resident Physicians of Alberta

2020 - 2021 **ANNUAL REPORT**



We are the
voice of 1,700-
resident physicians
in Alberta

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PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: A Look Back

Dear Colleagues

Many will refer to the 2020-21 academic year as unprecedented; while this is true, I prefer to reflect on the year as remarkable! Resident physicians were critical to Alberta's COVID-19 response. On behalf of PARA and all Albertans, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank every resident physician in Alberta for their service, contributions, advocacy, and patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank-you!

COVID-19

PARA was amongst the first organizations in Canada to create and maintain a single landing-page for resident physicians. This page provided up-to-date information pertaining to resident physician training and COVID-19. Our model was reproduced by other resident physician associations across the country.

The pandemic also required that PARA reimagine how we work and offer services. Due to business continuity plans and processes in place, the PARA office was able to nimbly transition to remote work and then back to a hybrid model. This was done without any major disruption to the suite of services we provide to you our members.

The pandemic also changed how we connect and socialize. We could no longer run our usual in-person social events, leadership workshops or transition to practice seminars. PARA needed to transition to a virtual format. Despite this transition, PARA has seen higher participation in these events, compared to their in-person predecessors. As we move forward, to a post-COVID era, PARA will be looking at how we meet members' needs and offer programing. Your feedback is critical in shaping these.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity

PARA officially launched the Inclusivity & Anti-Racism Working Group in 2020. This working group built upon the foundation of the inclusivity

work PARA had done in the previous years—formalizing a structure for member engagement. This working group developed an equity impact assessment tool that is now being piloted.

Medical Education

While PARA has always been involved in medical education (MedEd), the pandemic afforded PARA new opportunities to become more directly involved in medical education advocacy.

We heard from members that licensing exams were a significant issue for resident physicians. In addition to our partnership with Resident Doctors of Canada (RDoC), your 2020-21 PARA Executive Board directly liaised with and advocated to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) and both universities. We also advocated nationally to the Medical Council of Canada, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). In all these conversations PARA's approach was to represent the diversity of member opinions and to offer constructive solutions. PARA's contributions to the national licensing conversation were critical in leading to the outcome seen in the spring.

As PARA continues into the future, please continue to bring your MedEd concerns to your PARA assembly representative, directly to the executive board or connect the PARA office staff.

These are snapshots of the work achieved by PARA during the 2020-2021 academic year. Thank you to all members who volunteered and supported PARA last year.

Stay well. Stay safe.

Dr. Franco Rizzuti
Past President

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

We are building the foundations of our careers during a pivotal moment in history. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on workplace norms, the health care system and on personal levels will last long into the future.

Similarly, the pandemic is changing medical education. I am excited to see how PARA and the resident physicians of Alberta are influencing the future of residency education. PARA's events and behind-the-scenes leadership ensure resident physicians are empowered, informed and involved in many aspects of this work.

The resident physician's voice has been at many tables. Thank you to the many volunteers on PARA committees, Assembly Delegates, Executive Board and the PARA staff. Let's celebrate these successes with a few examples.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI)

PARA has been active on EDI topics internally. As well, the EDI focus of PARA's Executive and Assembly Delegates on external committees has been noted by our partners. The Alberta Medical Association, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta and the universities have since asked for even more resident physician participation on multiple EDI-relevant committees and topics.

Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Exam Part 2 (MCCQE2)

Last year concerns that members shared with PARA about the MCCQE2 gave us a voice at provincial and national tables. PARA's dedication to sharing the diverse perspectives of our members, along with some individuals who went out of their way to be collaborative with partners, helped build trust with these partners. Our partners then reached back out to Alberta resident physicians to learn more. I have yet to hear of resident physicians in any other province or organization be as proactively engaged as we experienced here in Alberta.

COVID-19

Over the past 20 months we have remained in continual contact with AHS and the universities to ensure resident physician concerns and issues are raised and addressed. We have proactively partnered with the universities and Alberta Health Services on COVID-19 issues including redeployment, impacts on learning, scheduling and wellness. Sharing members' perspectives has helped prevent and decrease problems- some even before they impacted our education or patient care. Still, many of us face these challenges and PARA continues its advocacy.

Dr. Lauren Bilinsky
PARA President

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued

From the beginning, PARA's priority was to keep, staff and members informed and safe. The [Covid-19 Updates page](#) on the PARA website provided, and continues to provide, timely updates from AHS, the universities and our partners, as well as sharing wellness resources to help support our members during a time of significant stress and uncertainty. PARA staff and members were kept safe by adopting a remote workplace and shifting all program delivery, including events and presentations, to a virtual format.

Visual Refresh

We were also excited to launch our new PARA Visual Identity. The new logo and colour palette were developed in consultation with our members to create a look that appropriately represents resident physicians in a dynamic and engaging way.

A new look, a new website. The [PARA website](#) not only showcases the new identity, but replaces the old site with improved functionality. More engaging and user-friendly, the new site allows members and the public to easily access information related to residency training in Alberta.

I hope you like the new site as much as I do. I encourage you to follow PARA on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for monthly activities, prizes, and important updates.

If you're interested in these types of activities, I encourage you to participate in PARA events, join a committee or consider running for the Assembly or Executive Board next year.

Anytime you speak to PARA, your program's Assembly Delegate(s), or an Executive Board member you contribute to the future of medical education. The issues brought to PARA, and recognition of things going well, help direct our work. For example, PARA's EDI focus, COVID-19 response, and the Agreement negotiations priorities have been largely directed by the feedback members have provided.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns about your residency experience, the Resident Physician Agreement—or just to say hi.



ABOUT PARA

PARA is a non-profit association that endeavours to provide effective representation for physicians completing further training in a residency program. PARA advocates excellence in education and patient care while striving to achieve optimal working conditions and personal well-being for all its members.

Vision

Alberta's resident physicians will be:

INFORMED about their patients' health and innovations in medicine.

EMPOWERED to create healthy professional working and learning environments.

INVOLVED in shaping the future of health care delivery in Alberta.

Strategic Priorities



ADVOCACY

Be a respected voice in the development of health care policy in Alberta



COLLABORATION

Foster and strengthen relationships with partners in both medical education and health care delivery



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Strengthen engagement and transparency between PARA and its members



RESIDENT PHYSICIAN AGREEMENT

Negotiate the Agreement, securing competitive compensation, benefits and workplace conditions



RESIDENT PHYSICIAN WELL-BEING

Promote, encourage and support resident physician well-being



SUSTAINABILITY & CONTINUITY

Ensure long-term sustainability and continuity of the Association

2021 – 2022 EXECUTIVE BOARD



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President
Public Health and
Preventive Medicine with
Family Medicine
University of Calgary



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EMMA FRIESER

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Coordinator



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Member Services
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ADRIENNE HILL

Communications
Coordinator

Resident Physician Agreement

Intro

PARA negotiates the **Resident Physician Agreement** on behalf of resident physicians in Alberta. The four parties represented within the Agreement are Alberta Health Services (AHS), PARA, the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. The Agreement addresses the provision of health care services within a learning environment during residency training, such as salary, well-being benefits, stipends, on-call service expectations and working conditions.



Member Benefits

PARA members enjoy benefits that are mandated through the Resident Physician Agreement. These benefits include:

- Education and compassionate leaves
- Flex days
- Health/flexible spending account
- Health and dental insurance
- Long term disability insurance
- Maternity/parental leave



Working Conditions

Resident physician working conditions are also mandated through the Resident Physician Agreement. These include:

- call rooms
- commitment to safe and secure work environments
- resident physician lounges



Fatigue Management

As both learners and health care providers, resident physicians are in a distinct position. This dual role means resident physicians often work long hours providing patient care as part of their training. PARA is committed to advocating for evidence-based fatigue management initiatives.



Taxi Reimbursement

The PARA Taxi Reimbursement Program ensures resident physicians make it home safely when they are too tired to drive after an in-house or switched on call shift. Research has shown that resident physicians and the public are particularly at risk from motor vehicle collisions caused by fatigue. The program reimburses resident physician transportation—via taxi, Uber or public transit—contributing to member and public safety and illustrating PARA's commitment to resident physician well-being.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Faces of Residency

The **Faces of Residency** profiles encourage resident physicians to learn about other specialties, aid medical students with their career decision-making process and help interested members of the public understand more about resident physicians.

Resident Physician of the Month

The **Resident Physician of the Month** is an initiative focused on improving resident physician well-being and engagement by recognizing and rewarding resident physicians who make a positive contribution to their work environment while maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Blog

PARA's blog features articles written by Alberta's resident physicians. Topics include parenting during residency, resiliency and identifying values. We are always looking for resident physicians to author blogs. If you are interested please reach out to the PARA office.

Social Media

PARA connects with our members through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Between the three channels, PARA has over 1,300 followers. Our social media accounts are one way we disseminate important information to members—this was especially critical during the pandemic as information shifted rapidly and could impact resident physicians working on the front lines of the crisis.

800+ followers

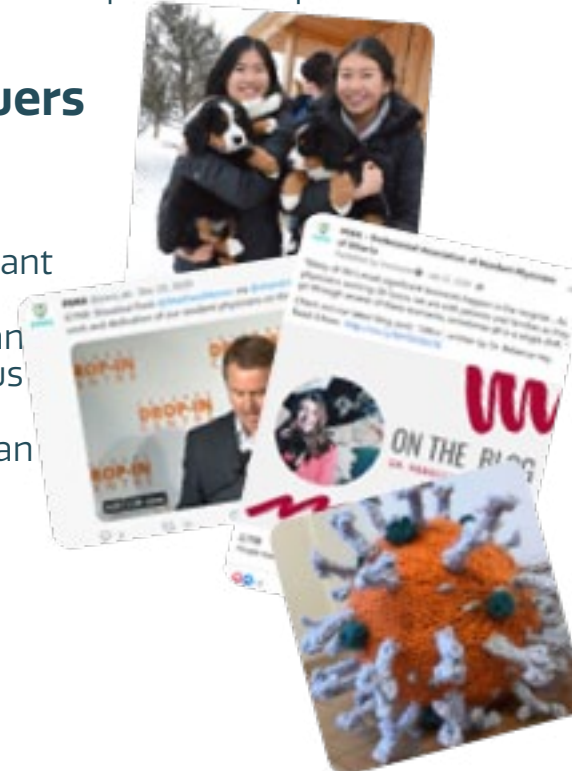
A picture is worth a thousand words so they say. Our **Instagram** account provides snapshots of life during residency training in Alberta and is home to PARA's monthly photo contest. Members share photos of their lives—such as pets, hobbies and favourite foods.

650+ followers

Facebook is one way we help resident physicians stay connected to PARA and each other by sharing information, experiences and stories. The most popular post of the year was read over 273 times and shared the personal experience of one of our members.

750+ followers

Twitter is a fast way to get messages to our members about important information such as upcoming workshops and events, health care news and other topics that impact resident physician life.



LEADERSHIP

Involvement with PARA provides resident physicians with several benefits, including the opportunity to network with colleagues with similar professional backgrounds and interests. It also exposes them to trends and best practices within their profession and provides leadership training and experience.

Volunteering

Volunteering with PARA allows resident physicians to directly benefit their own residency experience and that of their colleagues. It provides opportunities to interact with people from all facets of residency and from all areas of Alberta, as well as learning about the function of different organizations within health care and how decisions are made. PARA volunteers have the opportunity to interact with the leaders of health care change. PARA opportunities include:

- Serving on the PARA Assembly
- Participating on PARA committees and working groups
- Serving as an ambassador at an external partner meeting
- Hosting social events
- Attending educational opportunities and social activities



Leadership Workshops

As part of our commitment to leadership development, PARA hosted a virtual Leadership Workshop for members in fall 2020 on anti-racism. This two-part workshop explored issues related to racism in the workplace and presented interactive case studies to help empower participants to address these issues and advocate for themselves and on behalf of patients as they progress through their careers.



Transition to Practice

PARA hosted virtual information sessions and networking/recruitment fairs in fall 2020 for resident physicians who were preparing to complete residency training and transition into independent practice. These events included information sessions on recruitment protocols in Alberta, considerations for entering into practice, new-in-practice physician panels, and networking opportunities with the organizations and recruiters who are involved in the transition into practice process.



WELLNESS

PARA's **Community and Well-being Committee** worked throughout the academic year to promote, support and facilitate resident physician well-being in supportive working, living, and learning environments. Wellness initiatives have included monthly activities, an Acts of Kindness Initiative, Wellness Month and the awarding of Wellness Initiative Grants.

Monthly Activites

PARA held monthly draws and activities supporting resident physicians by asking our members to recognize and support their colleagues, share recommendations and offer reflections. We had over three hundred resident physicians from the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary participate in our monthly draws throughout the academic year.

| | |
|------------|---|
| JULY: | Recommendations for how resident physicians are staying active outside of residency |
| AUGUST: | Book recommendations |
| SEPTEMBER: | Restaurant recommendations |
| OCTOBER: | Board game recommendations |
| NOVEMBER: | Recommendations for well-being resources |
| DECEMBER: | Holiday baking recommendations |
| JANUARY: | Tell us what you are looking forward to in the new year |
| FEBRUARY: | Recognize your resident physician colleagues |
| MARCH: | Recommend your favourite plants or gardening tips |
| APRIL: | Identify a colleague you would like to share a meal with |
| MAY: | Submit photos of how you keep well as part of Wellness Month |
| JUNE: | PARA gave away pints of ice cream from Made By Marcus for Ice Cream Rounds |

WELLNESS continued

Acts of Kindness

PARA introduced a new initiative in the 2020-2021 academic year—an Acts of Kindness reimbursement program designed to support and encourage resident physicians to perform acts of kindness in the workplace. The initiative was piloted in December 2020 along with a meal voucher program in an effort to support wellness, community and overall morale among resident physicians during an especially difficult period.

The initiative provided \$30 reimbursements to resident physicians who wanted to perform an act of kindness in the workplace. In the pilot 44 Acts of Kindness were completed, with equal number of participants at both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. Resident physicians from 16 different programs participated. Acts of kindness ranged from

- purchasing "a couple cacti for our R1s to remind them that they are tough and resilient, but still need to take care of themselves!"
- purchasing pints of ice cream for surprise weekend drop offs
- resident physicians paying forward support during quarantine with hot chocolate bombs from a local bakery.

Resident physicians who participated were provided with a feedback survey; of the resident physicians that participated in the survey 100 per cent said the act of kindness made them or others feel great and 95 per cent said they were more likely to perform another act of kindness.

The Act of Kindness Initiative was repeated in February along with a monthly activity to recognize resident physician and allied health colleagues. In the second iteration resident physicians could request funding as groups in order to perform acts of kindness for larger groups of resident physicians. In February, we had 58 participants perform 48 acts of kindness—37 acts of kindness completed at the University of Alberta and 11 acts of kindness completed at the University of Calgary. Resident physicians from 21 different programs pariticipated and acts included everything from dinner for resident physicians on call to packages with red envelopes and chocolate money to celebrate Lunar New Year for resident physicians in the Internal Medicine program.

This PARA initiative embodies what kindness and thoughtfulness is—personalized for each individual, no one-size-fits-all! What a compassionate gesture by PARA! Bravo and thank you!

I know my co- resident physicians were really surprised and touched by the gesture, which definitely helped me feel really great about providing some positivity to their day. It was a lovely burst of happiness in a very challenging and trying time!

It feels nice to thank others for their hard work and service during the pandemic.

WELLNESS MONTH

During the month of May, PARA organized its annual Resident Physician Wellness Month (RWM) which encourages resident physician wellness and recognizes resident physicians for the work they do. The activities organized for wellness month included:



What Wellness Means to You

A photo contest for resident physicians to share pictures of what wellness means to them. Practicing wellness might be spending time with family, road trips, cooking, painting, bike riding, bird watching, playing with dogs or having coffee with a friend.



On-Call Wellness Reimbursements

PARA offered reimbursements for on-call necessities or snacks for resident physician lounges, call rooms or other on-call areas for resident physicians that do not work in hospitals. Funding was based on program size and lounge.



Movement Contest

PARA's step contest ran over three weeks in May. Prizes included a prize for the team with the greatest percentage improvement, for the team that walked the most ground over the three-week period and weekly prizes.



Meal Planning Workshop

PARA hosted a dietitian for a Meal Planning workshop, providing a learning opportunity for resident physicians to learn how to pair certain nutrients together to feel fuller, control weight and lower insulin.



Salaam B'y: A Story of a Muslim Newfoundlander

Executive Board Member Dr. Nazia Sharfuddin hosted a virtual screening of a film she co-produced—Salaam B'y: A Story of a Muslim Newfoundlander. The screening was followed by a conversation about creating communities of inclusion and kindness.



RAMADAN: Virtual Breaking of the Fast

In April, PARA worked with the Community and Well-being Committee and the Inclusivity and Anti-Racism Working group to offer an online gathering to break the fast for Ramadan. PARA hosted a virtual breaking of the fast for any resident physician to join every Thursday throughout Ramadan. This was tied into the monthly give away for April, asking resident physicians to identify a co-resident that they would like to share a meal with.

WELLNESS INITIATIVE GRANTS

PARA strives to encourage, facilitate, and preserve our members' pursuit of well-being, in all of its many facets, both personally and professionally. Funding, in the form of grants, is available through PARA, to support resident physician-led initiatives that promote wellness within PARA's membership.

The Community and Well-being Committee approved four applications for Wellness Initiative Grants in 2020-2021. The initiatives that were funded are:



CIM On-call Snack Fund

The goal of this initiative is to provide easily accessible, individually-packaged, snacks for IM resident physicians on call. The goal of this initiative is to make resident physicians feel recognized and appreciated for their hard work overnight as well as tackle dehydration/hunger while on call and explore how this small action can translate to improvements in overall wellness.



Mindfulness for Medical Trainees

This ongoing initiative will explore the potential benefits of online mindfulness on depression, anxiety, stress and burnout in resident physicians as well as mindfulness levels over the course of an online program offered to resident physicians.



rotations.
Ice Cream Rounds

The informal peer debriefing initiative will follow an 'Ice Cream Rounds' (ICR) format. ICR aims to provides a safe and inclusive space for trainees to come together to discuss the challenges inherent to life as a resident physician. The goals of this initiative are to:

- Provide an intervention that supports Internal Medicine resident physicians through the stressors and challenges related to training, which have been particularly heightened during the ongoing Covid19 pandemic
- Improve resident physicians confidence in, and comfort with, disclosing personal challenges
- Foster a culture within medicine that promotes an inclusive learning environment with active encouragement to share vulnerability



Resident Physician Check in Program

The primary objective of this program is to ensure that all resident physicians feel supported and connected to the larger residency cohort during their most difficult, time-consuming, and isolating rotations. The goal is to bolster well-being during times of need, reduce resident burnout, foster an environment with open dialogue about residency challenges and provide easily accessible peer support. Each month, the Pediatric Wellness Committee provided a check in and a small token of appreciation to resident physicians on more difficult



ADVOCACY



Resident Physicians in the Legislature

As part of our leadership and advocacy development mandate, PARA is committed to fostering strategic relationships and positively impacting health care policy in Alberta.

Resident Physicians in the Legislature (RIL) is a continuing advocacy event providing Alberta's resident physicians the opportunity to participate in face-to-face meetings with elected representatives and senior government officials and to offer their distinct perspectives on issues relevant to health care delivery in Alberta. It also supports the CanMEDs roles of health advocate and communicator.

Unfortunately, the 2021 RIL was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic; we look forward to a strong event in spring 2022.



Physician Supply Advocacy

For the past several years, PARA has been active in advocating to the Government of Alberta around appropriate and effective strategies for managing physician supply in Alberta. As frontline health care providers early

in their careers, resident physicians have a distinct perspective on health care in Alberta and provide an important voice in policy discussions.

A sustainable health care system attracts and retains highly qualified and motivated individuals. Albertans need physicians who are not only interested in training in Alberta but staying and practicing throughout Alberta upon completion of their training. Collaborating with medical trainees (resident physicians and medical students) is essential in developing policy that will serve Albertans far into the future.

In support of physician supply advocacy, PARA struck a working group—made up of PARA members and representatives from the Medical Student Associations at the University of Alberta and University of Calgary—to consult the resident physician and medical student communities. This consultation included a comprehensive survey which helped inform key recommendations to Government. We look forward to continuing to advocate to the Alberta Government to help ensure the provision of excellent medical care to Albertans now and into the future.

ADVOCACY *continued*



Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity

In response to the tragic death of George Floyd and the global Black Lives Matter movement, PARA issued its **Anti-Racism Statement**, committing to prioritizing ongoing efforts

in support of equity, diversity and inclusivity for its members. To support this work, the Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Working Group (EDIWG) was established, made up of resident physicians and focused on advocating for members facing barriers during their residency training; ensuring inclusivity and equity in the Association's programming and operations; and empowering individual members with tools to advocate for themselves and their patients throughout their careers.

In support of EDI goals, the EDIWG worked on the following projects:

- An Equity Impact Assessment tool to use when reviewing new programming
- Supporting PARA in advocating re: Incident Reporting with Alberta Health Services and the two universities
- Working with PARA's Community & Wellness Committee and Communication team to recognize culturally significant events
- Working with community members to revise and improve PARA's Land Acknowledgement

The coming year will see continued efforts towards building inclusive programming and process for the Association.



Awards



Clinical Teaching Award:

PARA recognizes excellence in resident physician education through the Clinical Teaching Award. This award is given to a deserving physician in Calgary, Edmonton and a rural centre. The 2020–2021 recipients:

Dr. Erik Singendonk (U of C)

Dr. Sudha Koppula (U of A)

Dr. Vesta Michelle Warren (rural)



Interdisciplinary Teamwork Award:

Resident physicians work as part of a team providing care to patients, and the experience of that team is greatly dependent on the contributions of its members. The Interdisciplinary Teamwork Award recognizes our allied health care colleagues who value and exemplify a positive team-based approach, and who advocate for healthy and caring work environments for all members of the team and our patients. The 2020–2021 recipients:

Dr. Rita Robinson (Calgary)

Dr. Tyler Moore (Edmonton)



Resident Physician Well-Being Award:

PARA recognizes the outstanding contributions of educators to resident physician well-being through the Resident Physician Well-being Award. This recognition is awarded to a physician preceptor in Calgary, Edmonton and a rural centre. The 2020–2021 recipients:

Dr. Arlene Kanigan (U of A)

Dr. Mark Anselmo (U of C)



Resident Physician Mentorship & Teaching Award

This award recognizes resident physicians who have demonstrated excellence in resident and medical student mentorship and teaching. One resident physician from the University of Calgary and one resident physician from the University of Alberta will each be awarded a prize of \$250 annually. The 2020 – 2021 recipients:

Dr. Amanda Wagner (U of A)

Dr. Michael Mak (U of C)

Funding



Conference Sponsorship Program:

The PARA Conference Sponsorship Program helps embody the value PARA places on resident physician education and resident physician wellness. As part of this, PARA sponsors resident physicians to attend conferences and other events that support their training.



Research on Resident Physician Wellness Initiative:

Research into resident physician wellness within Alberta has not been a well-studied topic. Residency in Alberta may have specific nuances and challenges that may have gone unrecognized due to the lack of funding and research into resident physician wellness in a systematic method. Introduced in October 2018, the initiative supports resident physician research projects on resident physician wellness in Alberta.



Resident Physician Wellness Initiative Grants:

Launched in May 2019, the Resident Physician Wellness Initiative Grants provide funding to support member-led initiatives that promote wellness within PARA's membership. Preference is given to initiatives that impact a broad cross-section of resident physicians and display innovative strategies for addressing wellness goals.



PARA Bursaries:

PARA funds two bursaries for graduating medical students who are entering a residency program in Alberta—one bursary for each of the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

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