

News We welcome news items of less than 300 words; we may edit them for clarity and length. News items should be emailed to journal@doctorsofbc.ca and must include your mailing address, telephone number, and email address. All writers should disclose any competing interests.



Jillian Lin



Paige Dean

2020 MacDermot writing prize winners

The 2020 J.H. MacDermot Prize for Excellence in Medical Journalism: Best article or essay was awarded to Jillian Lin for her article “Palliative care and legacy creation” [*BCMJ* 2020;62:292-293].

Jillian would like to thank both Betty and her late aunt, who inspired the article, as well as Dr Pippa Hawley for providing guidance on the Legacy Project. Jillian wrote this article as a second-year UBC medical student. She is now a third-year student going through clinical core rotations in the Vancouver-Fraser region. As she goes through her clinical rotations, she continues to learn from patient encounters and feels fortunate to be involved in caring for another person’s well-being. Jillian aspires to be a resident physician in Canada when she graduates in 2022. She is excited for the years to come and curious about what kind of physician she will become. Her professional interests are broad but consistently include youth and

children’s health, mental health, social medicine, and palliative care.

The 2020 J.H. MacDermot Prize for Excellence in Blog Writing: Best blog post was awarded to Paige Dean for her post “Stay informed, stay safe: How to handle everyday activities during the COVID-19 pandemic” [*BCMJ.org*, 28 June 2020].

Paige is in her final year of medical school at UBC and feels fortunate to have spent the past 4 years training in beautiful British Columbia, a place she proudly calls home. Although the past year has brought many changes, she found great fulfillment by participating in this project (Practical solutions for COVID-19 challenges), which helped her navigate the uncertainty brought about by COVID-19. Paige hopes to spend her career providing holistic medicine as either a pediatrician or a family doctor. Outside of medicine, Paige is an avid runner, enjoys exploring the great outdoors by hiking and skiing,

and looks forward to the return of live music and theatre performances so that she may continue to indulge her passion for the arts.

The winning article and blog post were selected by BC physician and regular contributor to the *BCMJ*, Dr George Szasz, in lieu of the Editorial Board. An Editorial Board member had competing interests with several of the eligible articles; therefore, the Board elected to defer to an external judge to ensure an impartial result.

Dr Szasz found the candidates’ work to be excellent, clever, and sometimes even touching. Each article was informative, interesting, and wildly varied in content, while the blog posts were short, focused, and written in a conversational manner, making it a difficult task to choose a first among equals. In the end, Dr Szasz found Jillian Lin’s essay to represent the most significant achievement in medical writing. He was grabbed by her touching presentation about a medical student’s journey in understanding death, and the description of her halting and fearful approach to death and her evolving courage to be involved with dying people. In the blog writers’ group, Paige Dean’s post resonated for Dr Szasz. He felt her fear of inadequacy and insecurity when trying to offer factual health information to patients, and her description of how she gained confidence made for a realistic blog post.

Congratulations to all authors. BC medical students are encouraged to submit full-length scientific articles and essays for publication consideration. Each year the *BCMJ* awards a prize of \$1000 for the best article or essay written by a medical student in BC, and may award a prize of \$250 twice per year to the writer of the best blog post accepted for online publication in the preceding 6 months. For more information about the prizes, visit www.bcmj.org/submit-article-award.

Doctors of BC insurance team working remotely to support your needs

With the onset of COVID-19 pandemic a year ago, Doctors of BC implemented a work-from-home protocol to keep staff and members safe and healthy. Simultaneously, physicians recognized the need for insurance to protect their assets and provide peace of mind to their family, and demand for our services increased significantly.

For the Doctors of BC Insurance Department, this meant shifting our 22-person team of advisors, administrators, and support staff from a paper-based office environment to a fully remote setting. Doctors of BC worked closely with the insurance carriers and our IT team to ensure continuous and seamless support during this time of uncertainty. As a result, digital processes were developed and enhanced

to ensure all insurance applications and queries were handled confidentially and in a timely manner.

Here are some of the ways physicians can now interact virtually with Doctors of BC for their insurance needs:

- Schedule appointments with insurance advisors via a 24/7 online booking system.
- Use enhanced videoconferencing technology via your tablets, desktops, and mobile devices to stay connected on a personal level.
- Complete and sign most applications digitally (eliminating the need to print and manually sign).
- Access higher limits of insurance coverage without providing blood or urine tests, thanks to updated underwriting guidelines. (Please ask your insurance advisor for details.)

- Access individual insurance certificates outlining coverage and plan details online in the members area of the Doctors of BC website.
- Pay invoices online, or set up automatic direct debit payments (complete a banking change form to begin).
- Submit forms electronically to change or add beneficiaries on your life insurance or accidental death and dismemberment policies or to add new dependants or office staff to your health and dental plan.

We look forward to seeing you again in person, but until then, we are a phone call, email, or Zoom meeting away for all your insurance needs.

—**Kerri Farrell**

Project Coordinator, Members' Products and Services

Learn about potential billing issues early; check out your mini profile

Your 2019 mini profile is now available on the Doctors of BC website. The profile provides statistics based on the MSP payments made to you for the services you provided in the 2019 calendar year, including any settlements or retroactive payments issued as of 31 March 2020. This allows you to monitor your billings in comparison to your peer group and address any potential issues quickly and early. Understanding the flags on your profile, which could put you at higher risk for an audit, can help you determine if you need to make changes to your billings and alert you to a potential issue that could be avoided. Also in the data are claims paid by MSP, on behalf

of ICBC and WorkSafeBC. The profiles are an accurate reflection of claims submissions and payments made in the claims record that identified you as the physician who provided the service, or in the case of referred services, identified you as the referring practitioner.

Visit www.doctorsofbc.ca/news/2019-mini-profiles-now-available for more information. If you have questions or need help understanding your profile, contact Juanita Grant at jgrant@doctorsofbc.ca or 604 638-2829 (toll-free 1 800 665-2262).

—**Tara Hamilton**

Advisor, Audit & Billing, Economics, Advocacy & Negotiations



British Columbia Medical Journal

@BCMjMedicalJournal

BCMj Blog: New episode of DocTalks: Physician burnout during COVID-19

Reports of physician burnout are increasing as BC doctors work to meet the unprecedented demands generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Read the post: bcmj.org/blog/new-episode-doctalks-physician-burnout-during-covid-19



Follow us on Facebook for regular updates



Improvements to Rural Retention Program encouraging physicians to practise in rural communities

The Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC), a partnership of Doctors of BC and the BC government, has announced significant changes to the Rural Retention Program (RRP) that will increase eligibility for incentives and benefits and stabilize funding to better recruit and retain physicians into practices in rural communities. The RRP offers incentives and benefits to encourage doctors to establish and maintain practices and connections in rural communities. The program is designed to enhance the supply and stability of physicians in rural communities as defined by the Rural Subsidiary Agreement (RSA). The changes reflect feedback from extensive consultations with rural physicians, communities, and health authorities as part of a review of the program. This completes the first phase of the review.

Consultations

Recognizing that the eligibility criteria had been largely unchanged since the program started nearly 20 years ago, the JSC undertook a comprehensive 3-year review of the RRP starting in August 2018. Facilitated by the Rural Coordination Centre of BC, nearly 600 rural physicians were consulted via facilitated dialogue, webinars, and a provincial survey. In addition, medical and administrative leaders in each rural health authority, community groups, subject matter experts, and other partners were consulted to develop recommendations.

Feedback included suggestions to address the annual fluctuation of rural points in some communities, to ensure the RRP remains a relevant incentive program including coverage for medical or parental leaves, and to create equity with the business cost premium.

The JSC agreed to hold the points constant while it conducted the review.



Changes to the Rural Retention Program

Effective 1 April 2021, the changes are:

- A temporary reduction of the RRP income eligibility threshold. The JSC recognizes that COVID-19 has impacted professional practice. To broadly support physicians whose income may have been impacted, the income requirement for eligibility of the RRP flat fee in 2021/22 has been reduced from \$75 000 to \$65 000.
- New and retroactive eligibility for physicians on parental leave or planning medical leave are available. Until now, physicians on parental or medical leave were not eligible to receive RRP payments. To support physicians to stay in the community, the changes mean that physicians will be eligible for the RRP flat fee payment and their earned RCME benefit for a period of 12 months, effective retroactively to 1 April 2020.
- The Rural Business Cost Modifier (RBCM) is being introduced to support physicians who reside and practise in rural communities. This change aligns payments to rural physicians with doctors in urban areas who are eligible for the business cost premium payments as per the recent Physician Master Agreement. An increase will be added to rural physicians' RRP flat fee payment disbursed through the health authority on behalf of the JSC.
- The minimum point threshold to be eligible for full rural benefits has been reduced from 6.0 to 1.5 points. The communities falling between 1.5 and 14.99 points will now be considered "C" designated communities and will be eligible for those benefits. This means that more communities will be eligible for RRP payments for their physicians, and they will be able to continue to receive other benefits under the RSA.
- To help mitigate year-to-year variations and uncertainties, and to appropriately stabilize the community points, the JSC will now implement point assessments using a five-year rolling average. This will ease the year-to-year fluctuations, stabilizing payments and benefit levels in communities.

For questions or inquiries, contact rural-programs@doctorsofbc.ca.



Fast-tracked vaccinations for the vulnerable: Communicating with patients

Doctors of BC has prepared a series of scripts and articles for doctors to raise awareness among their patients on how to determine if they are eligible for early vaccines designated for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable, and, if they are, how to register for their vaccinations. The information is available on the Doctors of BC website at www.doctorsofbc.ca/news/bc-physicians-how-communicate-patients-about-fast-tracking-vaccinations-vulnerable (login required).

Do you have an idea?

Send your writing to the BCMJ

The *BC Medical Journal* is written by physicians like you.

We welcome your contributions, from letters to scientific papers and everything in between.

What's in between? Blog posts, articles, essays, profiles, the Proust questionnaire, and more.

Not sure if we'll be interested? Email us to enquire: journal@doctorsofbc.ca.

Much of the *BCMJ*'s content is selected by our Editorial Board, a group of eight physicians from diverse backgrounds, practice types, and locations.

Guidelines: bcmj.org/submit-article

Contact us: journal@doctorsofbc.ca, 604 638-2815

BCMJ
BC Medical Journal