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# 2008 / 09

## ANNUAL REPORT

**Support for Today**

**Change for a Healthy Tomorrow**

### **Our Mission**

AIMGA is committed to the responsible, informed, and equitable integration of international graduate physicians into the Canadian Healthcare System. The Association aims for the recognition of skills and experience gained outside Canada, without compromising current Canadian medical ideals or standards.

### **Our Vision**

Our vision is to integrate IMGs into the Alberta Health Care System, thus working towards the benefit of the growing population of Alberta.

### **Our Beliefs**

- **International Medical Graduates** represent a skilled and professional workforce that should be utilized to support and improve Alberta's health care system.
- There should be **fair and equitable access** for all Alberta's international medical graduates to the medical licensing and training programs according to the Canadian standards.
- **All Albertans** should have the best health care in the world.
- There is a **physician shortage** in the province and that this shortage is affecting the quality of health care received by Albertans.
- As Alberta's immigrant population is rapidly increasing, there is a need for IMG's who can understand and respect the needs of Alberta's **culturally diverse population**.
- **Dialogue and cooperation** with decision makers at all governmental levels will promote the smooth integration of Alberta's international medical graduates into the Canadian health care system.

## Letter from the Executive Director

I am very pleased to introduce this first Annual Report of the Alberta International Medical Graduates Association as its first Executive Director. The Association has been extremely busy since it was incorporated in 2001, and from where I am sitting now, it will be even more active in the coming year.

International Medical Graduates are increasingly being seen as an important remedy to some of Alberta's urgent health care challenges. Alberta and the rest of Canada, has recognized a significant shortfall in the number of qualified licensed physicians. Indeed, in April 2009, the Canadian Medical Association President, Dr. Robert Oullette, told the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health that more than 4.5 million Canadians do not have a family physician.

Enabling internationally trained physicians to achieve full licensure and to integrate them into Alberta's health care system offers a prudent, economically viable method to respond to this challenge. In addition, the population of Alberta is becoming increasingly diverse as a consequence of rising immigration from an array of countries. In this context, internationally educated physicians are an important solution, capable of delivering appropriate health care services to a culturally and linguistically distinct immigrant population.



**Susan McMahan**  
Executive Director

Alberta, as well Canada at the federal level, have implemented or introduced ambitious programs to assist the assessment and integration of international medical graduates in response to the recommendations of Task Force Two on the Licensure of International Medical Graduates (2004). I believe that there is very much more work to be done.

In March 2009, AIMGA was pleased to announce project funding to develop a "fast-track" model to integrate IMGs into Alberta's medical system. Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the project will create a model for assessment, orientation and training to facilitate IMG licensure within Alberta. The project, which ends in March 2010, will conclude with a Roundtable Conference to develop specific recommendations and plans for implementation. In addition to my responsibilities as Executive Director, I will continue to lead this project.

In May 2009, AIMGA received the further good news that funding for an observership program has been approved. This program will enable AIMGA to recruit, screen and match IMGs with licensed, practicing Alberta physicians for a formal observership program. Each IMG accepted into the program will have the opportunity for a three-month session with three different family physicians. We are recruiting for a Coordinator to develop and administer the program and hope to announce details before long.

In the upcoming year, AIMGA will continue to work towards the responsible, informed, and equitable integration of international graduate physicians into the Canadian Healthcare System.

Regards  
Susan McMahan, Ph.D.

## Letter from the President

As President of AIMGA, I would like to thank the 2008-2009 EC for all their hard work, the time spent on very tough issues and for everyone's patience and understanding. I would also like to welcome all the new members of AIMGA who have joined in the past year.

I would like to bring you up to date on some of AIMGA's accomplishments of the past year.

**Ongoing Activities:** Our list-serve continues to be popular as AIMGA continues to grow. The study groups in Calgary have been quite active, with Uzma Naveed organizing the MCCQE II and the OSCE classes at the AIMGA office. Others have also been organizing classes in smaller groups at the Foothills library, and using the listserve as a way to connect with new members and to exchange materials. The Edmonton groups have also taken on a lot of initiative this year in organizing study groups. Peace Nisar, AIMGA's Vice-President, has been actively involved with those groups, and Albert Kers, previous AIMGA President for two years, is now doing his residency in Edmonton and helping with some study groups.

**Communications:** This year AIMGA received funding to hire a Communication Specialist, Becky Scheer. Becky has developed a successful communications plan which enabled us to polish our image and increase our effectiveness with the media, major stakeholders and the general public.

**Research:** We were also successful in securing funding for an important research task, which will look at way to integrate qualified IMGs into the system more quickly. Susan McMahon, who is the researcher for that program, has also taken on the position of Executive Director. This will allow AIMGA

to function more smoothly, and allow the EC to focus more on pertinent issues facing IMGs.

**Policy:** In this year AIMGA has remained engaged in policy work that affects all IMGs. AIMGA was granted a position on the AIMGAP Steering Committee, which allows us the space to be the voice for IMGs in terms of the AIMGP. We also had several meeting with the Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness, and his Deputy Minister.

AIMGA was also contacted regarding the Physician Assistant document circulated by Alberta Health and Wellness (before it became Alberta Health Services) in which we stated clearly that although we believe in creating more possibilities for IMGs, we also believe that we are more than qualified to be fully licensed practicing physicians. But, this shows that as Alberta recognizes us more and more as a strong organization and unified voice that we are able to bring these issues up at the policy level.

In sum, it has been a very busy year for AIMGA, and we expect this upcoming year to be even more so! Please stay tuned to all of the new initiatives you have heard about today. But even more importantly, be involved! This Association depends on the volunteer work of all of us, and the more you put into this, the more we will all profit. If you are interested in taking part in any committees, in helping to set up or organize study groups or any other activity that AIMGA does, please do it! In this way you will prosper and feel good that you are helping other's to do so as well.

Sincerely,

Polya Ninova  
President

## MEMBER PROGRAMS & SERVICES

The Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA) is a provincial non-profit organization that is committed to the responsible, informed, and equitable integration of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) into Alberta's health care system.

AIMGA currently represents over 600 members from across Alberta, with an increase of five to 10 new IMG members per month. Our members enjoy a number of benefits, including access to a range of membership support programs:

### **AIMGA Forum**

AIMGA members continued to have access to this highly-active online discussion group, enabling them to be informed and connected with AIMGA and other members across the province.

### **Yahoo Groups Online Networking**

Our Yahoo Group email and file sharing service remained a strong resource for AIMGA members to stay connected with current activities, projects, study groups, and exam files.

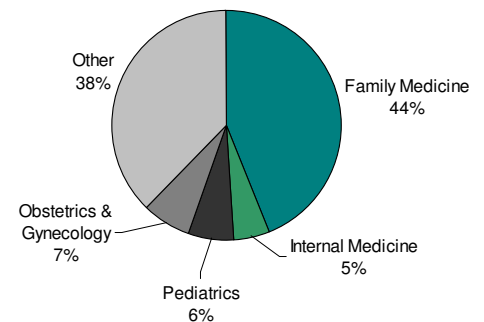
### **Study Groups**

AIMGA member study groups continued to be an extremely popular method to connect with other IMGs and work together to prepare for the MCCEE, MCCQE Part I and Part II, and the OSCE exams.

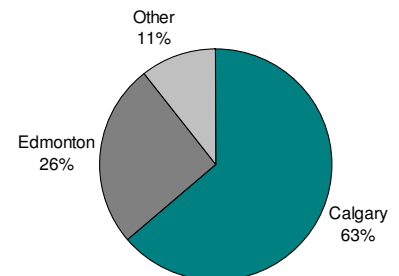
### **New Member Information Package**

This past year, AIMGA worked to create a series of documents to provide to new members as they join the organization. The package includes an overview of AIMGA programs and services, and a brief outline of the licensure process in Alberta. The package has been very helpful in ensuring our new members are well informed about AIMGA and IMG issues in our province.

**Area of Practice / Specialty**



**Residence in Alberta**

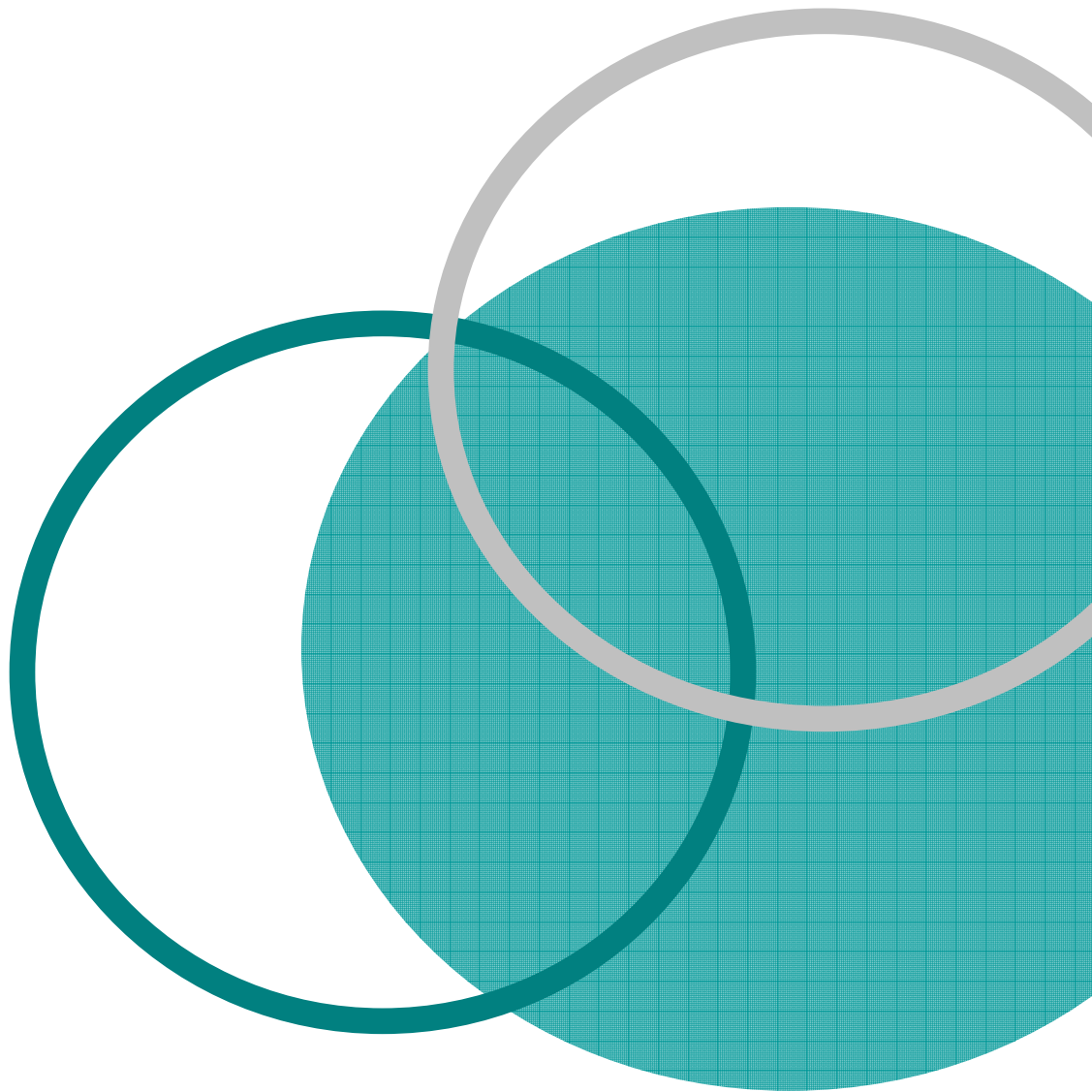


### **Skill Development Workshops**

As funding allowed, AIMGA continued to offer skill development workshops for licensure prerequisites such as CPR courses, Communication Proficiency and Presentation Styles. Practice interview sessions were also available for members preparing for the final interview after passing the evaluating exams.

### **Mentorships / Observerships**

The past year saw a great deal of planning and preparation for AIMGA's "Observership Project". A funding proposal was written and approved, the initial stages of building contacts and developing a work plan are underway. The year ahead will see this project further develop. Our aim is to assist in setting up "Observerships", or clinical training arrangements, where the IMG observes the physician in their work. Although these arrangements are not recognized for licensure, mentoring does offer an excellent opportunity to maintain knowledge, prepare for clinical simulation exams and build networks.



## COMMUNICATIONS

A Communications / Media Specialist was hired in August 2008 to complete a 12 month contract for AIMGA. Through the completion of a Communications Plan, a number of communications initiatives have been introduced and/or improved in the past fiscal year:

### **LifeLine Newsletter**

In December 2008, AIMGA created and distributed the first issue of our electronic newsletter, *LifeLine*. Our newsletter will continue to be produced on a quarterly basis with the aim of providing members with regular updates on new developments and AIMGA activities.

### **AIMGA Website**

Throughout 2008/2009, the current AIMGA website was reviewed by the Communications Specialist and a number of recommendations were identified. Work on updating and improving the website will be carried into the upcoming year. The goal will be to improve the existing website so that it becomes a useful and thorough resource for our members, community partners, financial supporters, the media and the general public.

### **AIMGA Display**

A simple yet effective display was created for use at AIMGA membership events and public relations opportunities. The basic tabletop display can be easily updated and revised at the AIMGA office, allowing for quick and cost-effective maintenance.

### **Brochures**

The AIMGA membership brochure was updated, refreshing the design and updating the content. The resulting publication is a more professional looking piece which will be informative for new and returning members alike. The brochure will also serve as a general information brochure for any individual or group wishing to learn more about AIMGA.

Another brochure was developed to help promote AIMGA's new mentorship program. The brochure is aimed at practicing physicians who would be interested in becoming a mentor.

### **Media Relations**

AIMGA made some great strides this past year in connecting with the media, establishing important media contacts, and developing materials for a media kit. AIMGA achieved success in generating media coverage for IMG issues, including several interviews for print and TV.

A media kit was developed to inform members of the media and other groups wanting to learn more about AIMGA. A media training workshop and resource guide was also developed to ensure AIMGA staff and executive, as well as AIMGA members, are empowered to continue the media efforts.

## RESEARCH, ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

While supporting IMGs achieve licensure, AIMGA is also leading the drive for change. AIMGA strives to provide a united and strong voice for IMGs. Through our research initiatives, advocacy work and partnerships, we champion the role and value of IMGs to the government, private sector and the general public.

### **Research**

To continue to be an informed resource and advocate for IMGs, AIMGA scans research and conducts studies on key issues affecting our members and other IMGs in our province and across the country. We also collaborate with other organizations to search for, conduct and disseminate research to IMGs and other important groups such as the government and the medical community.

In January 2009, AIMGA secured funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to create a “fast-track” model for assessment, orientation and training to facilitate IMG licensure within Alberta. The project, which ends in March 2010, will conclude with a Roundtable Conference to develop specific recommendations, with the ultimate aim of implementing a successful engagement plan for the integration process in Alberta.

### **Community Partnerships**

AIMGA staff worked in partnership with other community groups, including the Calgary Coalition for Meaningful Employment (CCME). Our involvement encompassed participating in working groups such as the Stakeholder Engagement committee and the Fund Development committee. The CCME is a community based network of organizations who work to reduce the barriers for internationally trained professionals.

### **Advocacy**

AIMGA continued to develop a strong connection with the Alberta International Medical Graduates Program (AIMGP). Following a request put forward by AIMGA, the AIMGP has agreed to ensure an IMG representative sits on the Steering Committee.

The past year also saw a number of achievements in government relations, with AIMGA coordinating two meetings with the Minister of Health and Wellness. AIMGA also established connections with some individual MLAs, who would become valued supporters for other government relations activities during the year, and hopefully for the years to come.

As part of our advocacy and leadership efforts, AIMGA will host the first annual “IMG Day”, which is scheduled for May 26, 2009. To mark our celebration of “IMG Day”, we are hosting an event for our membership at the Legislature Building in Edmonton, followed by an open house luncheon with the MLAs, and attendance in the Public Gallery for the afternoon session of the Assembly. We are looking forward to this important stride in building connections with the provincial government.

## AIMGA AT WORK

### **2008 / 2009 Executive Committee**

Chairperson  
VP Edmonton  
VP Calgary  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Directors at Large

Dr Polya Ninova  
Dr Peace Nissar\*  
Dr Nancy Zacarias  
Dr Arjumand Husain  
Dr Yanjun Duan  
Dr Anwara Islam\*  
Dr Alireza Mirzaian\*\*

Ex-Officio

Dr Mehrnaz Yousefi

\*Represents executive members in Edmonton

\*\*Represents executive members in Grande Prairie

### **Staff**

Executive Director / Researcher  
Coordinator  
Communications Consultant

Susan McMahon  
Keiran Gibbs  
Rebecca Scheer

Thank you to our  
funders for their support:



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Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et  
Immigration Canada



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