



# Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association

PHYSICIANS ADVOCATING FOR HEALTH

October 11, 2023

Dear Members,

When someone tells you something isn't right or that something is harming them, believe them. Start with listening to the person in front of you. Anytime you think "Those people are so difficult," you are missing the person. Sit back, pause, and be curious. Ask, how did we get here? What are your concerns? The answers might surprise you.

Unnecessary misunderstandings and toxic situations can occur in so many areas of medicine—in our workplace teams, our relationships with peers, and with our patients. Patients with significant past trauma and medical issues resulting—at least in part—from this adversity, deserve extra patience and partnership.

We are blessed to be hosted by a rich history of Indigenous peoples in the Edmonton Zone. Sadly, our history also includes many atrocious things that happened to those communities at the hands of some of our predecessors. I wasn't there, you weren't there, but it is up to all of us to make the medical system safer for everyone. Start with the person in front of you.

If someone tells you that something is making them uncomfortable, believe them. If someone tells you they are in pain, just believe them. It will never hurt us to start from a place of trust and understanding, working to solve a problem or situation together. It may end up that you get tricked, but wouldn't you rather that happen than cause more suffering? It is imperative we acknowledge our privilege and power as physicians. We risk much less than many of those who come to us for help.

As we go forward, let's sit with both the beautiful and the horrible stories of our patients and our colleagues. I have learned so much this past month. At our recent AMA Representative Forum session with Dr. Esther Tailfeathers and an incredible Indigenous physician panel, I was humbled by the thoughtful responses provided with grace and kindness to questions that would have triggered my rage.

At Dr. Cass Felske-Durksen's recent talk on *The Colonial Origins of the Opioid Poisoning Crisis*, I was inspired by the message that we need to stop using Indigenous status as a marker of illness. Rather, we ought to look to Indigenous cultures as a source of strength and solutions. (Cass, I want to have coffee with you, ask questions, and mostly listen.)

Learning about what supports our patients—whatever their background—and about our own ideals and core values will help us listen effectively to others.

October is my last month as president of the EZMSA, as I am now on the AMA Board of Directors. My time with the EZMSA has been both rewarding and challenging. We have advocated for patients and our community, worked to build relationships with the other ZMSAs to better represent the medical staff in

Alberta, changed our logo, and piloted a physician advisor program to improve physician wellness in practical ways.

Dr. Mona Gill will be acting president until the end of December, then start her official presidential term in January 2024.

It has been an absolute privilege to represent you within AHS and the wider community. I look forward to watching from the sidelines as the EZMSA community grows. I know that EZMSA will continue to foster connection, community, and understanding. When physicians unite, we can accomplish amazing things. Let's keep communicating with each other and our patients—with kindness, trust, and respect.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "K. Kasha".

Katherine Kasha, MD CCFP FCFP  
President 2023

ezmsa.president@gmail.com

**Mission: Physicians Advocating for Health**

**Vision: Engaged Physicians; Sustainable Healthcare; Health Community**

**Values: Advocacy; Integrity; Growth and Learning; Community Connection**

**Contact the EZMSA Physician Advisor at: <https://albertazmsa.com/physician-advisor>**