

Dear Members,

As President of the Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association for 2023, I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. I have been a Family Physician in Edmonton and area for the last 16 years. Outside of my practice, my other work roles include several within the Alberta Medical Association: Edmonton Zone delegate for the Representative Forum, Member-at-Large for the Section of Family Practice, and Family Medicine Co-Chair for the Joint Physician Advocacy Committee. My children are ages thirteen, eleven, ten and eight, and my pandemic puppy is now two. As parents of sports-loving children will understand, I live at soccer facilities when not working.

For most of my career, I was quite content to work in my private group practice, and then go home—happily unnoticed and intentionally uninvolved in the wider health system. So, what happened to motivate me into advocacy roles? In the fall of 2019, I was sad, burned out and spending far too much time on Twitter. There I found the EZMSA account: smart, witty, and defending physicians in a time when there were many active attacks by government. I was intrigued by this organization whose express purpose is to *advocate for physicians* and what they feel is important in the health care system.

I learned a tremendous amount about advocacy and the larger health care system during my first two years with EZMSA. I strongly feel that when physicians feel supported, they can perform to their capacity *and* have better quality of life. This funnels down to better patient care.

We have seen numerous changes in the healthcare system over the last few years. Some changes may be helpful, but many are not. For some time, we have known that the system wasn't as functional as it could be. However, as the pandemic wears on—with instability and ongoing issues with government in the background—it has become clear our health care system is in crisis and actively collapsing.

So, what would I like to focus on in the next year is, quite simply, RESPECT and KINDNESS. We need to talk to each other. More importantly, we need to actively listen. You cannot fix an issue without asking the other people involved: “Is this the actual problem?” “Do you want my help?” “How can I support you?”

Everyone's job is hard. But so often we are struggling with the same issues and frustrations. By listening to each other, we can begin to understand what really needs to change and move forward together to bring about meaningful system change. *Let's humanize those who lead our organizations, and work together to find a better path forward.* Imagine physicians at all levels in the system truly collaborating to find safe solutions for patients—solutions that also work for physicians.

Not everything is in our control, but *the way we interact with each other is.* We can choose to be respectful, to be kind, to work to understand each other. I remember early in the pandemic when I would call in for a consult. The doctor on the other line would stop my story for a second to ask, “How are you?” I would choke back tears, reply, “Not great. How are you?” “Same.” Then we would go on with the consult. But in that moment, we felt a connection: a recognition that both of us were struggling but doing our best. Sadly, I feel that we have lost that empathy for each other.



My hope is that EZMSA can continue to foster connection, community, and understanding. When physicians unite, we can accomplish amazing things. So, communicate with each other—with kindness, trust, and respect. I will include the EZMSA Mission, Vision and Values with each President’s letter, as a reminder for us all in the year ahead. I look forward to working with you. *Let’s change the system and make physicians’ lives better.*



Warmest regards,

Dr. Katherine Kasha
President 2023