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WINNERS OF THE 2024 EXCELSIOR AWARDS



The Excelsior Awards are presented each year to resident doctors who have contributed to enhancing their workplace or community through an innovative project. The goal of the awards is to recognize residents' involvement and contribution. Five prizes are awarded, one per affiliated association (AMRM, ARM, AMReQ, and AMReS), and one for physicians-in-training in family medicine. A \$2,500 bursary and a certificate are given to each award winner. Here are the winners of the 2024 edition.



Dr Giancarlo Sticca
R1 in General Surgery, AMRM

Dr Sticca is a co-founder of ZoneVerteMD (ZVMD), an undertaking aiming to come to the assistance of the medical community. It has two main goals: to provide medical students with all the information they need to make an enlightened career choice, and to inform resident doctors about available wellness resources. The website was set up during the pandemic, to foster discussion between medical students and health professionals, in view of the reduced clinical exposure. The site (zonevertemd.com) contains hundreds of questions from students and answers from teaching physicians concerning their practice, and has been consulted by more than 3,000 people so far.

An article evaluating the impact of this initiative has been submitted to the *Academic Medicine Journal*. Another section of the site, *Wise Threads*, enables medical students to buy lab coats and stethoscopes at affordable prices, and received an award from the Canadian Medical Association. To date, a team of eight individuals has contributed to maintaining the site.



Dr Émilie Groulx-Boivin
R1 in Pediatric Neurology, ARM

Dr Groulx-Boivin co-founded *Kits for Kids* in March 2021, and chairs the charity, which distributes essential supplies in the form of kits to needy families. She felt powerless in the face of the reality experienced by some of her patients, and wanted to do something to lessen the impact of poverty on the health and wellness of children in that situation. The organization distributes different kits, depending on patients' age, whether they are newborn, infants aged 0-2, or children aged 2-5. The bags containing the items are reusable, and include an assortment of hygiene supplies (diapers, wipes, baby shampoo), and educational or play objects, such as markers, colouring books, and plasticine. Doctors, nurses, and social workers distribute the kits to families on the basis of need. Currently, there are 20 distribution centres in Montreal, Estrie, and Montérégie. To date, Dr Groulx-Boivin says they have raised \$155,000 and distributed 3,120 kits to vulnerable families. And she is continuing her mission. Her involvement includes managing the website, and preparing kits with hundreds of volunteers. Several groups are particularly targeted, namely, single-parent or low-income families, immigrants, and refugees, Aboriginal communities, and disabled children. She has attained her goal. This experience has helped enhance her skills by meeting both the social and the medical needs of her patients.

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Dr Caroline Gagnon
R2 in Obstetrics and Gynecology, AMReQ



Dr Zahra Hana Mokhtari
R2 in Family Medicine, ARM

Dr Gagnon's project is directly linked to her specialty. Each year, the resident doctors in the Laval University Obstetrics & Gynecology program organize a Pap test clinic, on a no-charge, walk-in basis. But she noted that the entire clientele attending this evening consisted of cisgender women. In her view, the lack of trans and non-binary patient clientele has multiple causes: sitting in a waiting room with mostly cisgender women can lead to dysphoria, as can a gynecological examination, previous bad experiences with the healthcare system, including failure to use the right pronoun/surname, staff feeling uncomfortable, etc. Being concerned for the health of the LGBTQ+ population, she took the initiative of establishing a cervical cancer and STI screening clinic exclusively reserved for that patient population, offering them a safe, comfortable space for receiving care. To that end, she affiliated with the SPOT community clinic in Quebec City, which works with marginalized populations, and offered the first edition of her clinic in October 2023. The event was modest, but the comments received were highly positive. Several patients had given up screening several years before owing to the lack of resources. This first edition motivated her to repeat the experience. This is the first clinic of its type in Quebec City. The activity also serves to raise resident doctors' awareness of the needs of the trans and non-binary community.

Dr Mokhtari received the Excelsior Award in the "Family Medicine" category. On arriving in Canada, she set up a charitable group called "We don't leave Iran all on our own," following a mission originating with Bani Adam, the "children of Adam" charity founded in Iran in 2017 by physician friends and herself, after the Kermanshah earthquake. The group now has 160 members, including local doctors, but also people wishing to help Iran's poorest provinces. The organization's main goal is to keep children in school, encourage them to complete their studies, and provide for the most basic needs, in order to offer opportunities and give them a better life. The funds raised through this organization are used to buy school materials, but also footwear for children in the poorest villages, or to help high school graduates take university entrance exams. She notes that the situation is very serious in Iran. In fact, last year, 930,000 children there left school because of poverty. In 2023, her organization helped 2,740 young people stay in school, covered 900 pairs of bare feet, and provided support for 80 single-parent families on a monthly basis.



Dr Annie Loan Anh Nguyen
and **Dr Ariane Lamoureux**
R1s in Family Medicine,
AMReS



These two family medicine residents set up a continuous improvement project at GMF Chicoutimi Family Medicine Group (FMG). Their efforts were inspired by concerns in the media about gynecological violence, in particular the absence of any analgesia option for IUD insertion, a procedure that is often stressful and painful for patients. So they assessed current clinical practices through a review of the files of patients who had had an IUD insertion at the FMG. They then identified the obstacles explaining the gaps between recommendations on pharmacological and non-pharmacological analgesic methods by means of surveys and meetings with a multidisciplinary team including patients. This approach led them to develop a decision-making tool, create a checkable form for IUD insertion appointments, and introduce pharmacological molecules acknowledged to be effective when IUD insertions are carried out in their clinic. A subsequent analysis of patient files showed that discussion of pain management rose from 10% to 57%, and that the level of selection of effective pharmacological interventions rose from 50% to 88%.