

Michelle Graham

President, Canadian Cardiovascular Society



Equipping the next generation for success

The Canadian Cardiovascular Society (CCS) has been central to my life since I began my practice in Edmonton in 2001. As I begin my term as CCS President, I think of the personal impact this organization has had on my career. For more than 20 years, the CCS has provided me with opportunities and opened doors. It has connected me with amazing people. It has made me a better cardiologist. It has made me a better professor and mentor. I have felt the satisfaction of working together to achieve our shared goals.

My Presidency is coinciding with the return of this in-person Canadian Cardiovascular Congress – it is energizing and exciting to be back together under one roof. We would not be back here today, in such large numbers and with such enthusiasm if it weren't for the tremendous efforts of our retiring President, Marc Ruel, of all our colleagues on Council, and of the CCS staff team who worked so hard throughout the pandemic to meet the needs of members and keep the Society vibrant and relevant.

Like everyone in our community, I have experienced some tough moments in the past three years. As the pandemic unfolded in early 2020, we were already dealing with resource challenges. Clinicians were stretched to the limit. Even the strongest among us felt the strain of these conditions and, understandably, some retreated into themselves.

Within this context, my top goal as President is to reinvigorate the cardiovascular community with a culture of teamwork. I want to embrace and champion efforts to promote collaboration and strengthen the model of the One Heart Team. My plan includes strong support for the efforts of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee, which is committed to ensuring that people from every community, including racialized and marginalized ones, are part of the CCS family. This is important work. The EDI Committee's action plan will reduce systemic barriers to equal opportunity.

One area of personal concern is the low representation of women in cardiovascular sciences. Fifty percent of medical school graduates are women, but they make up fewer than 15 percent of cardiovascular specialists. We need to do more to attract the best and brightest to our field. Diversity among specialists improves patient satisfaction and quality of care, which are important to this organization and to all of us as individuals.

So, this first goal is to champion and strengthen our efforts to work together, to embrace new people and ideas, to promote a culture of respect, and to ensure that the CCS becomes an even more welcoming professional home. The outcome will be better care for our patients.

My second goal is to invigorate mentorship and support for our trainees. I have gained so much from my involvement in the CCS, and I want others to experience this too. The many benefits of being part of the Society span careers from start to finish, and like others did for me, I will support the Society to continue to create the conditions that encourage trainees to transition to regular members and find value in membership throughout their working lives.

I was inspired this fall when I helped interview 53 candidates for the Adult Cardiology Residency program at the University of Alberta. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, I met so many trainees who were burning with enthusiasm, extolling the wonders of cardiovascular medicine, and delighted to be embarking on future caring for patients with cardiovascular disease. It filled me with hope. Trainees are our future. Enhancing their professional journeys will be on my mind every day as I take on my new position.

A poem by Canadian poet Rupi Kaur, given to me by a former trainee, and framed in my office, says it best. I'll paraphrase it here: "Our work should equip the next generation... to outdo us in every field. This is the legacy we'll leave behind."

We are stronger together. Thoughtful, respectful, patient-centred care will allow all of us to achieve the CCS Mission. I look forward to working with the CCS Board of Directors, Council, the CEO and the management team to bring people together, to build strong teams and, ultimately, to advance heart health for all.

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