

Ian's Volunteer Story: Contributor, Canadian Skin Magazine



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It has been five years since I first started to volunteer with the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance (CSPA), and I am so glad that I did. I joined the CSPA because I wanted not only to support the health literacy of my patients at the bedside, but also the community at large across Canada. Today, my health mission remains unchanged.

My passion to serve the patient community was fostered by my two mentors, Drs. Sunil Kalia and Dafna Gladman. Drs. Kalia and Gladman are giants in the fields of dermatology and rheumatology, respectively. Dr. Kalia is an expert dermatologist at the forefront of psoriasis care and Dr. Gladman is a rheumatologist regarded as a global leader in psoriatic arthritis research. As a trainee, witnessing their care and service fostered my goal of community health literacy advocacy and skin disorder awareness.

As a dermatology resident physician and former pharmacist, I seek to help persons with skin conditions become empowered with knowledge and become active participants in their health. I see my role as a health advocate who brings awareness to skin conditions and skin treatments in an understandable fashion. My service to the CSPA has allowed me to achieve my personal health mission for my patients beyond the clinic.

As a regular contributor for the CSPA Canadian Skin Magazine, my goal is to inspire the reader, whether a person with a skin condition or a community member, to become active participants in their skin health by cultivating a basic understanding of common skin conditions. In doing so, I aim to address stigmatization that some persons with skin conditions may experience through improving community health literacy.

In addition, like my mentors, I hope to encourage the next generation of health professionals and colleagues to become involved in community service through my initiative. Flipping through each issue of Canadian Skin over the years, I am excited to see the diversity of contributors continue to grow from patient advocates and junior medical students to world class dermatologists across Canada. I enjoy volunteering with CSPA because working alongside a team of passionate community members towards a common goal of community advocacy is simply fun and meaningful. CSPA is a major voice that is heard and respected amongst community members and the dermatology medical community across Canada. The impact of CSPA's initiatives is far-reaching and significant to patient care. For example, many past pharmacy colleagues that I trained with have reached out to me after reading my Canadian Skin articles to learn more about resources to supplement their dermatology knowledge base and to help their patients going forward. The opportunity to be able to help persons with skin conditions not just locally, but across Canada, makes volunteering with CSPA all the more rewarding and special.

Why would you tell others that they should get involved with CSPA?

The skin is the largest human organ and essential to life. As such, the promotion of skin health literacy and advocacy is of great importance to not only persons with skin conditions, but also to every member of a community. The CSPA has consistently demonstrated initiative to advocate, educate and support Canadians living with skin diseases, conditions and traumas through a variety of projects and patient engagements.

The CSPA team, from its staff to its volunteers, is a team of driven, hardworking all-stars working towards a shared goal of patient advocacy. If you are interested in becoming involved with CSPA, I would highly encourage it! Everyone has something to offer. Five years ago, I chose to become involved with CSPA and I am glad I did.

I believe working on various projects with CSPA certainly made me a more empathetic person with better communication skills. You would acquire new skills if you volunteered for CSPA. Skin diseases are often associated with a significant impact on people's quality of life. Getting involved with CSPA would also give you the unique chance to advocate for people with skin conditions. Don't wait to join the community if you hope to use your skills to make positive changes!