



News Release – for immediate distribution

June 4, 2015

Winners of Awards of Excellence in Rural Medicine announced at 2015 rural medical conference

VANCOUVER – Eight British Columbia rural physicians were recognized and feted for their accomplishments and contributions to rural medical practice at the Rural Emergency Continuum of Care (RECC) medical conference held in Penticton, BC on Friday, May 23.

Five physicians – Drs. **Nancy Anderson** (Bella Coola), **Marlowe Haskins** (Smithers), **Neil Leslie** (Revelstoke), **Phillip B. Malpass** (Nelson), and **William Watt** (Fort St. John) – were honoured for their outstanding service, their facilitation of best clinical practices, their role as opinion leaders in their communities, and their personal and professional excellence in rural medicine.

Three physicians – Drs. **Eric Paetkau** (Sunshine Coast), **Michal Smialowski** (Tatlayoko Valley), **Paul Stent** (Fort St. James) – were recognized with lifetime contribution awards for outstanding service, facilitation of best clinical practices, personal and professional excellence, as well as their lifelong dedication to their rural communities over the span of decades.

The intent of this year's Awards of Excellence was to recognize 'Local Opinion Leaders' – physicians who benefit their communities by influencing health care provision. These leaders share their advanced knowledge with other local providers by virtue of strong social networks and positively influence healthcare outcomes in their community.

This is the second year that the Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) and the University of Northern British Columbia Northern Medical Program (UNBC NMP) have recognized physicians for their contribution and dedication to rural medical practice in British Columbia. In 2014, 'Outstanding Mentors' were recognized for their contributions to the training and mentorship support of rural doctors.

The awards were provided and hosted by UNBC NMP and RCCbc at the annual RECC rural medical conference. [A call for nominations was issued in February](#) through *BC Rural Update*, the eNewsletter of the RCCbc. A committee consisting of representatives from UNBC, RCCbc, and the University of British Columbia selected the 2015 recipients through a consensus process.

The Awards of Excellence in Rural Medicine are made possible through the generous funding provided by the [Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues](#) (JSC). The JSC is a joint collaboration between the BC government and the Doctors of BC that provides policy oversight as well as funding for rural physician programs to increase recruitment and retention of doctors in British Columbia.

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QUOTES

“Similarly to our inaugural 2014 Awards of Excellence in Rural Medicine, this year we are recognizing recipients from all across the province. This speaks to the strength of the rural physician community across British Columbia.”

Dr. Geoffrey Payne, Assistant Dean, Education and Research, UNBC Northern Medical Program

“The Rural Coordination Centre of BC also wishes to draw attention to specialists who work in relative isolation in their field in rural areas of the province. Because of the health need of BC’s rural communities, these rural specialists have a very wide ranging 'generalist' scope of practice.”

Dr. Kirstie Overhill, Mentorship and Peer Support Lead, Rural Coordination Centre of BC

BACKGROUND

UNBC Northern Medical Program www.unbc.ca/northern-medical-program

The Northern Medical Program (NMP), based at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) Prince George, is part of the distributed MD education program at UBC. The NMP delivers UBC’s MD curriculum in a northern and rural context, in hopes of training physicians that will stay and deliver healthcare services in northern British Columbia.

Rural Coordination Centre of BC www.rccbc.ca

The Rural Coordination Centre of BC (RCCbc) works to enhance rural education in British Columbia and advocates to improve the health of rural BC residents.

Working at the direction of the JSC, and in collaboration BC’s health authorities, post-secondary institutions, practitioners, and rural communities, RCCbc identifies gaps and overlaps in rural services throughout the province and creates initiatives to address shortfalls. It works to increase and sustain recruitment and retention of rural healthcare professionals to BC and to provide high quality, in-community healthcare to rural British Columbians.

Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues www.health.gov.bc.ca/pcb/rural_jsc.html

The Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC) is a BC-based entity that includes representation from the BC Medical Association (BCMA), the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the health authorities. The JSC advises the BC Government and the BCMA on matters pertaining to rural medical practice and develops programs and policies for BC’s rural physicians.