

Richie's Volunteer Story: Contributor, Patient Education Resources



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Why did you get involved with CSPA?

Before starting medical school, I spent about a decade in biomedical research at the University of Toronto, learning about how genetic and epigenetic factors impact the onset and progression of complex human disorders. As a graduate student, I also co-founded a medical science podcast that featured the voices of scientists, physicians, and patients. These experiences underscored the importance of science communication and patient literacy, and – coupled with a personal desire to learn more about skin disease – motivated me to apply my background to be of service to patients.

What do you perceive as outcomes of your involvement?

Over the past year, I have co-authored several educational resources for patients on a variety of topics in skin disease. I appreciate having been given the opportunity to contribute to the CSPA's mission of providing up-to-date and reliable publications that can empower patients to better understand their disease, and to provide actionable insights for patients to discuss with their healthcare providers. I have greatly enjoyed volunteering with the CSPA; this experience has allowed me the opportunity to gain a greater depth of understanding of many complex and still poorly-understood disorders, to learn about the diverse population of skin patients and their lived experiences, and to translate complex concepts into useful content that patients can understand and use to inform their care.

Skin is a lot more complex than most people think. Not only is the landscape of dermatologic disease broad and varied, the patient population is also incredibly diverse, with each community having distinct needs and challenges. Whether you're interested in a particular disease or community, or want to learn more about dermatology, the CSPA has many opportunities to get involved in advocacy and outreach, and to truly make a difference for patients.

Has a personal connection with the skin patient community inspired your participation?

As a dermatology patient, as well as friend and colleague to individuals with inflammatory skin disease, I appreciate the far-reaching burden of skin disorders and also understand the challenge of accessing timely care across Canada. As a community member and hopeful physician-scientist, I am thankful for the opportunity to continue contributing to the CSPA and its community, and to educate and inform wherever possible.