

A Conversation with Simal Qureshi

CSPA Committee Member: Affiliate Members, Breaking Barriers



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Why did you get involved with CSPA?

Throughout my medical school journey, I have been fortunate to engage in dermatology-focused research and initiatives that further fuelled my passion for the field. I was first introduced to the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance while attending the Canadian Dermatology Association conference a few years ago. I remember stopping by the CSPA table and coming across a handout on navigating dermatologic care for Muslim patients. As someone who had rarely seen her community reflected in medical resources—especially in dermatology—that moment stood out immensely. It was incredibly powerful to see an organization so committed to inclusive education, patient advocacy, and representing diverse voices. That experience ignited my desire to be part of CSPA's work in creating accessible, culturally-sensitive resources while continuing to foster a more inclusive future in dermatologic care.

What do you perceive as outcomes of your involvement?

Through my volunteer work with the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance, I hope to contribute meaningfully to expanding the organization's educational resources and supporting its ongoing advocacy efforts. My goal is to help create spaces where individuals—especially those living with skin conditions—feel seen, heard, and empowered in their skin. One of the most rewarding outcomes of my involvement has been the opportunity to help build patient confidence by providing accessible, easy-to-understand information and supports. By contributing to the development of inclusive and patient-centered resources, it is my sincere hope patients feel informed, validated, and supported in navigating their healthcare journey.

Why do you like volunteering with CSPA?

Volunteering with the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance has been incredibly fulfilling, as it brings together two of my strongest passions—dermatology research and patient advocacy—within a collaborative, supportive environment. Through CSPA, I've had the opportunity to deepen my dermatological knowledge while also strengthening my research skills, guided by both dedicated CSPA staff and expert dermatologists. I have explored areas of dermatology I am especially interested in, such as barriers to care in underserved communities and have had the chance to contribute meaningfully to patient education and empowerment. Being part of the CSPA team reminds me why I chose to pursue medicine in the first place—to listen, to learn, and to advocate for those who deserve to feel seen in every aspect of their care. Volunteering with CSPA has not only shaped the kind of physician I aspire to become, but it has also reaffirmed my commitment to equity, compassion, and working collaboratively to build a stronger, more inclusive community.

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

The Canadian Skin Patient Alliance is a unique organization that truly empowers its volunteers. The staff are phenomenal and encourage you to explore your personal interests and passions within dermatology—whether it's research, advocacy, or community outreach. Being part of a supportive network of passionate individuals and experts in the field has been an incredibly rewarding experience— one I'm truly grateful for. If you're someone who cares about dermatology, patient-centered care, and building a more inclusive and accessible community for those living with skin conditions, CSPA offers volunteers a supportive space to learn, contribute, and grow! The CSPA has shown me that working with them is more than just volunteering—it's an opportunity to make a meaningful impact while developing your own voice and expertise.

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

For most of my life, I have lived with severe atopic dermatitis—a condition that has challenged me both physically and emotionally. These experiences have not only shaped my resilience, but have also sparked a deep passion for dermatology and for supporting others who are navigating similar struggles.

Growing up in a rural community, I often found it difficult to access the resources and support needed to better understand and manage my condition. That lack of access made a lasting impression on me and is the catapult for many of my life's adventures, including medical school. It's part of what drives my involvement with the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance. Volunteering with CSPA gives me the opportunity to turn past, personal challenges into powerful, purposeful action—advocating for education, awareness, and inclusive care.

What inspires me most is the sense of community CSPA fosters. It's a space where people with skin conditions can feel understood, supported, and celebrated because one should not feel alone in their skin journey. I'm honoured to have contributed to the CSPA and their outstanding mission.