
May 23, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

May 26 to 30 is [Alberta Rural Health Week](#), an annual celebration hosted by [RhPAP](#) (the Rural Health Professions Action Plan) that highlights the importance of those who work to strengthen rural health care across Alberta. This event invites partners, communities and patients to come together to share their thanks with the physicians and other health care providers who together improve the well-being of rural Albertans.

We all know how critically important rural medicine is to the thousands of Albertans who live and work in rural communities. Without your skill, your knowledge and your dedication, Albertans would not be able to receive the care they need in the communities they call home, and those communities would struggle to remain economically viable.

RhPAP has put together a [Rural Health Week Toolkit](#), which includes everything from logos to social media graphics, to make it easy for individuals and communities to get involved. I encourage you to share these resources with the people in your world who understand why rural health should be celebrated.

Raising the profile of rural health and advocating for recognition and financial respect for the rural generalists who provide essential care in communities around our province, has been my central goal since becoming SRM President. Over the past few months I have continued to work to increase understanding of the unique work rural generalists do and how best to describe who we are and the communities where we work.

Recently, your SRM Executive drafted a definition for “rural medicine” that says, in part, that rural medicine occurs in communities where Rural Generalists hold a responsibility to care for the same patient in multiple clinical roles, providing comprehensive primary care or speciality care and one or more additional services, including emergency care, obstetrics, anesthesia, or enhanced surgical skills, among others. We specified that rural communities are those that require more than 25-minutes travel time or 50 km distance for a patient to receive the definitive care and/or investigations that they require such as MRI, CT, bone and bone density scans, ultrasound and mammograms. We defined remote communities as being located more than 200 km from Edmonton or Calgary.

We also defined the term “Rural Generalist,” referring to the description of Rural Generalist Medicine included the [World Summit on Rural Generalist Medicine](#) (in Cairns in 2014). Our definition explains that a Rural Generalist physician serves the diverse needs of rural communities by applying a population

approach to providing primary, secondary and emergency care. We noted that Rural Generalists are trained to meet the specific current and future health care needs of rural and remote communities by providing both comprehensive primary care and required components of other medical specialist care in hospital and community settings as part of a rural health care team.

We'll be sharing these definitions with partner organizations, medical learners and the public to help them better understand the breadth and the depth of the work we do and how integral it is to the health of rural Albertans.

As always, I want to thank you for everything you do for your patients, your profession and your communities. You make rural health possible and you deserve to be celebrated during Alberta's Rural Health week – and every week.

Regards,

Dr. Rithesh Ram
President, Section of Rural Medicine