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*Welcome to the most recent issue of Rural Rounds, which includes information and updates for members of the Section of Rural Medicine.*

April 7, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

March was an incredibly busy month for your SRM executive as we continued to advocate on issues that impact rural and remote health across Alberta. This included attendance at a number of meetings and events throughout the month, including a joint meeting with SFM and the PLE, and the Family and Rural Medicine Meeting (FRMM) on March 12. The FRMM, which is always held the night before the Representative Forum (RF), allowed family and rural medicine delegates to meet to prepare for the Spring 2026 RF that took place on March 13 and 14. During the meeting, we had presentations from the AMA Board on key priorities and worked on motions that would be brought before the RF.

The FRMM also received a presentation from the hospitalists who were seeking to establish a new Section of Hospital Medicine as a non-economic section under the Section of Family Medicine. After much discussion and clarification during the FRMM, the application was taken to the RF, where delegates voted in favour of its establishment.

While this was an important step for the metro hospitalists, it will have little impact on the rural generalists who provide comprehensive, full-scope care in rural and remote clinics and hospitals across Alberta. The scope of our hospital practice is far greater than metro hospitalists, as we cannot rely on other services and specialists to take on the complex or high acuity patients. In rural medicine, out of necessity, we do it all ourselves with limited to no supports. Even the supports that do exist are often virtual or at a distance, and rarely within our facility. As I have said many times before, we are the Swiss army knives of medicine – the specialists with the largest breadth and depth of any other physician group. We should not, and cannot, identify with a section that is primarily focussed on metro hospital medicine. While the Section of Hospital Medicine is not a fit for the work we do, we are happy to welcome and work with them as part of the Representative Forum.

In addition to the presentation on the Section of Hospital Medicine, the Spring 2026 RF included sessions on the Year 4 Arbitration Results, Negotiations 2026, Dual Practice and Private Pay Diagnostics and many other priority issues. I was also pleased to provide an update on the Rural Engagement Working Group (REWG), and the progress we have made so far on key deliverables such as service model mapping, workforce trends and performance indicators. I received excellent feedback from those in attendance and we are hopeful that the work of the REWG will be extended beyond its original one-year timeframe.

### **Rural Enhancement Program and Tarrant Scholarship Updates**

As many of you know, the [SRM Enhancement Program](#) was established to help rural students who are applying to medical school prepare for the medical school interview and improve their chances of being admitted. Since being launched, the program has helped hundreds of students with the application process. In 2022, we refreshed the Enhancement Program to utilize a mock Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) format to align with the interview processes at the University of Alberta and University of Calgary more closely.

In response to a request for an increase in funding to support expansion of the program, the AMA agreed to increase their funding to support one additional session in 2026, allowing us to host three virtual sessions via Zoom.

Interest in the program grew dramatically over last year, with 100 individuals expressing interest in attending compared to 40 in 2025, likely due to the opening of Northern Alberta Medical Program (NAMP) and Southern Alberta Medical Program (SAMP). The individuals who participated were invited to interview at the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of British Columbia, University of Saskatchewan, University of Toronto, McMaster University, Toronto Metropolitan University, Simon Fraser University, and Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

If you know of a student in your rural or remote community who is interested in a career in medicine, please inform them of the Enhancement Program and look for information for upcoming sessions.

[The Tarrant Scholarship](#) is one of the SRM's key initiatives, providing funds for selected third-year medical students from the University of Alberta and University of Calgary who demonstrate a strong interest in developing their career in rural medicine. Established in 2004, the scholarship has awarded more than \$500,000 to over 55 students from across Alberta. The Tarrant Scholarship is funded by donations from physicians like you, who work in rural Alberta and understand the importance of supporting students who have an interest in rural medicine. Currently, each scholarship is worth \$10,000 and in 2025 we were pleased to be able to award scholarships to three students. The 2026 Tarrant

Scholarship is now accepting applications and the deadline to apply is June 1. I hope you will encourage any eligible students you know to apply. You are also encouraged to consider donating to this important scholarship.

Thank you, as always, for everything you do for your patients, your communities and for the sustainability of rural and remote health.

Regards,  
Dr. Rithesh Ram  
President, Section of Rural Medicine