

Courage and kindness: leadership for the times we are in



Colleen Galasso

As a member of the team that helped plan and deliver the 2026 Canadian Conference on Physician Leadership, I am delighted to have the opportunity to reflect on the insights, conversations, and learning that emerged throughout the event in this issue's editorial.

What does leadership require when uncertainty has become routine, health care systems remain under pressure, and expectations of physician leaders continue to grow?

This question shaped this year's gathering in Montréal, where physician leaders from across Canada and beyond came together to explore the theme Redefining Leadership Through Courage and Kindness.

Throughout the conference, a central message emerged: courage and kindness are not opposing leadership qualities, but complementary strengths that are essential in today's health care environment. Courage allows leaders to navigate uncertainty, advocate change and make difficult decisions, while kindness helps build trust, foster psychological safety, support well-being, and create conditions in which individuals and teams can thrive. Ultimately, leadership is not defined by title or position, but by the everyday choices we make — how we respond to challenges, support one another, and inspire others to move forward. Together, courage and kindness are attitudes that strengthen teams, organizations, and health care systems.

The conference featured four inspiring keynote presentations, a dynamic panel discussion, and 24 interactive workshops focused on translating leadership principles into practice. Participants highlighted the relevance of

the content, the quality of the sessions, and the valuable opportunities for connection and learning with peers.

This issue of the *Canadian Journal of Physician Leadership* brings together the insights and ideas shared throughout the conference, featuring articles from the keynote presentations and panel discussion, as well as workshop abstracts highlighting topics such as physician wellness, mentorship, innovation, quality improvement, organizational change, and health system transformation.

We are also pleased to recognize this year's recipient of the Chris Carruthers Excellence in Medical Leadership Award, Dr. Nicole Boutilier from Halifax, Nova Scotia, as well as our newest cohort of Canadian Certified Physician Executives (CCPEs).

We look forward to welcoming you to Calgary for the 2027 Canadian Conference on Physician Leadership, taking place May 21–22, with pre-conference courses on May 20.

In addition to the conference proceedings, this issue also features another article in our Health Economics series, which explores how considering costs and benefits together can support more informed health care decision-making; the latest instalment of Coaching Corner, which uses a fictional dialogue to illustrate how coaching can help physician leaders move from overwhelmed toward clarity, prioritization, and intentional action; and a review of *The Outrage Cure: How Overcoming Anger and Betrayal Can Transform the Way We Live, Connect and Heal*, in which Dr. Alika Lafontaine explores the origins of anger and outrage and the role of empathy, authentic connection, and constructive problem-solving in helping individuals and organizations navigate conflict and create meaningful change. We are also pleased to introduce Visual Reflections, a new section of the journal that invites physicians to share original artwork.

As we continue to grow the journal's reach and impact, we are expanding efforts to connect its content with broader physician audiences. In addition to sharing each issue through our social media channels, we are strengthening connections through academic institutions, professional networks, and physician leadership communities across the country. We are encouraged by initiatives, such as the recent inclusion of the journal on McGill University's Faculty Life website, and look forward to building additional partnerships that will help bring the ideas, research, and experiences featured in these pages to an even wider audience.

Looking ahead, we are pleased to announce plans for a special themed issue focused on co-leadership that will be published in December.

Input on *CJPL*'s content, process, style, and format is always welcome and can be sent to Editor-in-Chief Abraham (Rami) Rudnick or to any of the *CJPL* team members.

We hope the ideas and insights shared in these pages will inspire you in your own leadership journey.

Author

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SPECIAL-THEMED ISSUE - CO-LEADERSHIP - DECEMBER 2026

We invite our readership to share their experiences, lessons learned, and innovative practices through co-authored submissions that explore the opportunities and impact of co-leadership in health care.

Physician leaders and their administrative leadership partners are invited to submit articles for this special issue to Deirdre McKennirey at deirdre@physicianleaders.ca by **November 1, 2026**.

CSPL Coaching Network



Dawn Martin

PhD, MEd, MSW, RSW

Mantra:

Its almost always about relationships, rarely about clinical competence. Sometimes raising awareness is not enough, skill building and support are necessary.