



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

**FOSTERING PATHWAYS,
AND ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY**



OUR STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Syed Ahmed	Vice Chair
Dorin Bagdan Mihalache	Treasurer
Al-Karim Walli	Secretary
Suhki Pritam	Director
Fadhil Khalil	Director
Dr. Salim Hamid	Director

STAFF

Deidre Lake	Executive Director
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AIMGA CALGARY

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Basma Sheikh	Advisor & Facilitator
Teresa Lau / Kelly Allen-Pitchko	Career Transition Program Coordinator
Nuruddin Lakhani	Health and Wellness Team
Nashit Chowdhury	Research & Evaluation Coordinator
Edna Ramirez Cerino	Health and Wellness Team Coordinator
Joyce Lam	Graphic Designer
Saif Sikdar	Mitacs Research Intern

AIMGA EDMONTON

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Monica Spencer	Program Administrator

CONSULTANTS

Clementine Crooks	Career Transition Program Employment Coach
Kevin Colton	Programmer
Kathleen Hall	Consultant / IELTS Facilitator
Shams Shamsuddoha	Digital Communications
Pamela Heath	Consultant

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ABOUT US

WHO WE ARE

AIMGA is a non-profit organization dedicated to the successful integration of International Medical Graduates (IMGs). We currently have 1200+ members.

CORE VALUES

Our core values include: Being responsive to the needs of our members, working together, having a professional and friendly attitude, and delivering quality programs. Essentially, we keep our members’ best interests at the heart of what we do.

VISION & PURPOSE

Improve healthcare through the re-engagement of IMGs into the Canadian healthcare system. Our goal is to equip IMGs with the information, skills, and tools they require to make informed decisions about their future careers and to integrate successfully.

“The right **person** in the right **seat** at the right **time**. We are here to assist at every step in the licensure process from application to integration.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

Distinguished guests, members, and staff of AIMGA, it gives me immense pleasure to present this report at the 2021 Annual General Meeting of the Alberta International Medical Graduate Association.

It has been almost two years since the start of this Covid pandemic. But despite the overwhelming challenges and difficulties, AIMGA has grown and even flourished.

We continue to grow in terms of membership. Presently we have 986 active members with a consistent rise in numbers of registrations of IMGs from outside Alberta. This is a testament to the fact that we are the only organization in Canada catering to the professional and career needs of IMGs and we are definitely gaining momentum here.

Our Calgary office has undergone major renovations and installation of equipment transforming to a space that is now capable to deliver our services and programs more efficiently. We invite our members and friends to come visit, meet our staff, and see what our new home has to offer.

Apart from our regular programs to support licensure pathways, our extremely dedicated staff and in particular our Executive Director tirelessly explores opportunities for placements and employments for our members within healthcare. This has led to the creation of our very successful Health and Wellness Team comprising of over 150 members that actively participate in the production of videos, podcasts, presentations, and webinars that are now widely used in the community. Members also provide critical support to vaccine clinics, contact tracing and outreach efforts in collaboration with our partners such as the Mosaic Primary Care Network and AHS as well as numerous ethnocultural community organizations. Our strength in our diversity, language and clinical skills are now widely recognized and sought after in various projects and initiatives within the province.

On behalf of the Board Directors I would like to thank our generous funders for their continued support of AIMGA's mission. We truly appreciate your valuable contributions through the years and we look forward

to a stronger partnership in the years to come. I commend our hardworking staff whose dedication, professionalism and commitment to their important work every single day. Our members rely heavily on our staff and we are deeply grateful for your work.

There are not enough words to express my sincere thanks for all the efforts, sacrifices and sheer determination of our Executive Director Ms Deidre Lake. With her strong leadership and focused vision AIMGA not only survived the past year but we thrived and we are even soaring further to new heights with our upcoming expansion to Western Canada. Lastly, I would like to thank our members for demonstrating resiliency and commitment to our profession. AIMGA will continue to persevere and assist you in your career goals every step of the way.

I look forward to an exciting year ahead. We have much work to do but together we can achieve success and build a better future for our IMG community.

In your service,
Dr. Jennifer Garcia



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Welcome to our Annual General Meeting, Fostering Pathways, and Engaging with Community.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge our funders. Without the support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada as we would not be able to do all that we did in the interest of our membership in 2020-2021. Secondly, I'd like to thank the Board of Directors for their continued support in my role as Executive Director. Thirdly, I'd like to give a genuine shout out of thanks to our AIMGA staff for their contributions. You are a great team and your dedication and commitment make AIMGA a great place. Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge our members. You are truly the people who inspire us!

The journey of internationally trained doctors is a challenging one. The window for arrival, completing examinations, obtaining the required language proficiency levels to compete for pathways to licensure is narrowing. It is not easy to navigate the various health and regulatory systems, to know where to start, and to understand the different provincial requirements and pathways. There's one assessment after another to prove your medical knowledge and skills in order to compete for positions. At AIMGA, we believe in bringing diversity to healthcare and your contributions. We have strived to make the process an easier one with the programs and services we offer and to be there for each and every one of you every step of the way.

When COVID19 hit, it brought attention to the underutilization of Internationally Trained Physicians. While IMGs were sidelined from supporting in the frontlines, we forged ahead with our Health and Wellness team and launched our HealthHub for Newcomers. We reached out to our community partners and offered our supports. Whenever, we were called upon, our response was always, "Yes, we can." No task was too small. We supported the vaccine clinics in both workplaces and communities. We called members of the community to address their vaccine-related questions and concerns. We equipped members with the evidence-based information they needed to make informed choices. We received calls to our HealthHub phone line from those in community and provided services and access in multiple languages. Our COVID Response Team then

created videos in 19+ languages that were shared by unions, primary care networks, and community leaders. These videos had a national reach of 200K+ views. Our members did various webinars and presentations to 23K+ community members. Our efforts were supported and recognized recently through funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada. Our meetings we held every Friday became a valuable part of our work and together we did it. We can look back and be proud. You've made a meaningful impact in community and it was a genuine pleasure of mine to see you develop your skills, confidence, and most importantly shine. I truly feel grateful for all that you've done and I look forward to the continued positive impact we can make to the future health outcomes for newcomers to Canada.

In this time period, we've continued to build our capacity around Alternative Career Pathways for IMGs and have developed over 85 fact sheets on various careers. We have built the infrastructure for a career decision making tool for IMGs exploring alternative careers in health. We are hoping to launch this tool in the new year. We've continued to work in partnership with the University of Calgary and many other community-based organizations. We will be engaging strategically with employers and stakeholders in the next phase of our research with newly funded initiatives that we will be sharing with you soon.

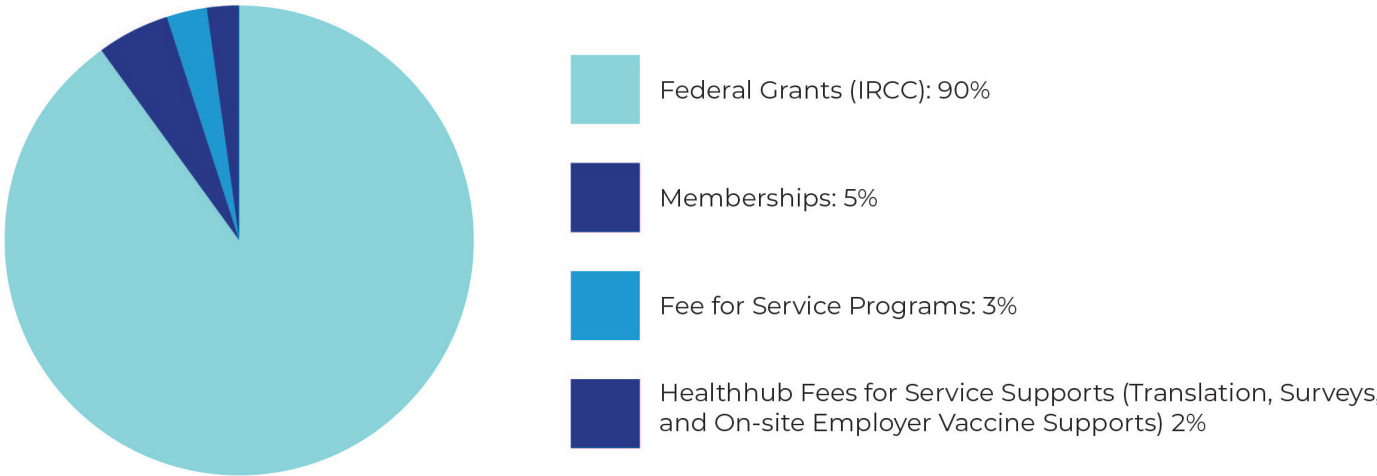
As a professional association, we all have a role in advancing the integration of International Medical Graduates in the system. We are creating awareness of the skills and knowledge IMGs bring with them to Canada. We are asking our membership to keep their profiles up-to-date so we can advocate on your behalf. We are continuing to innovate and to improve upon the delivery of our programs and services based on your feedback.

In the next year, I look forward to working collectively with all of you to foster pathways, and engage with community.

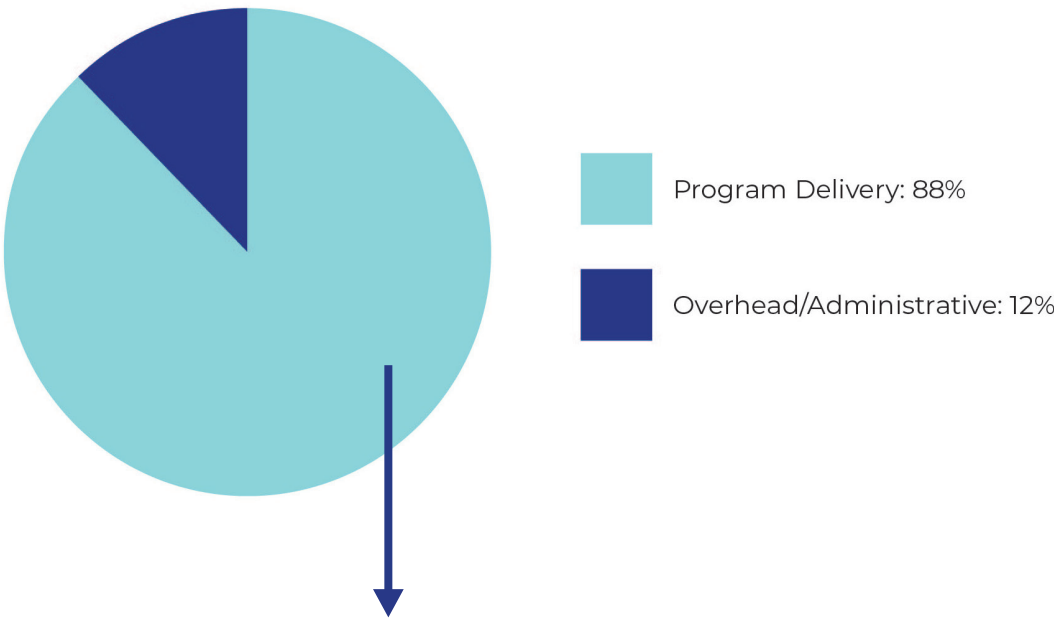
Sincerely, Deidre Lake

FINANCIAL REPORT

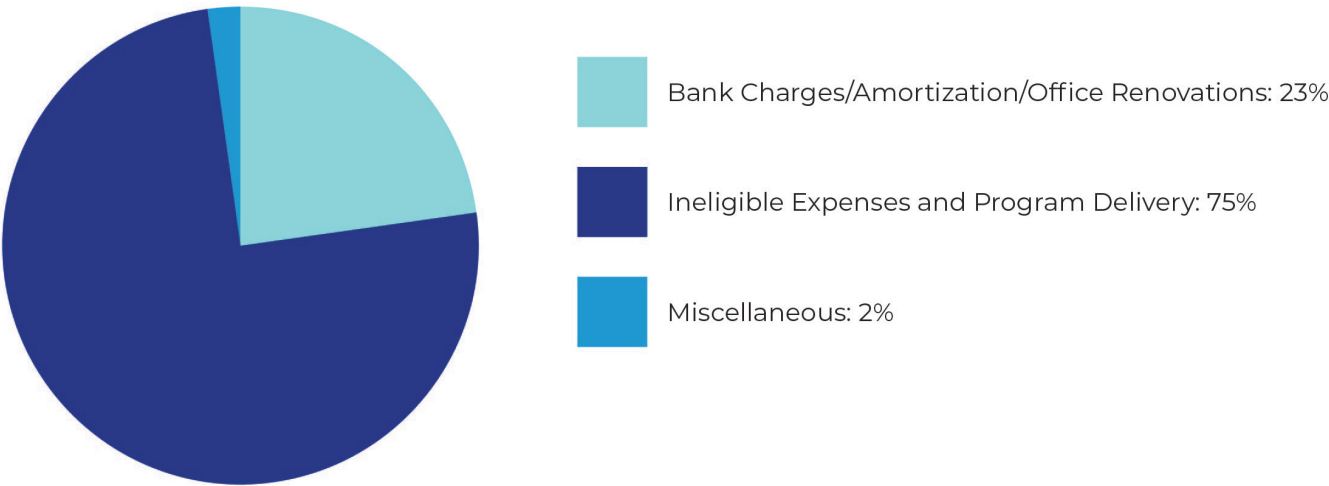
TOTAL REVENUE



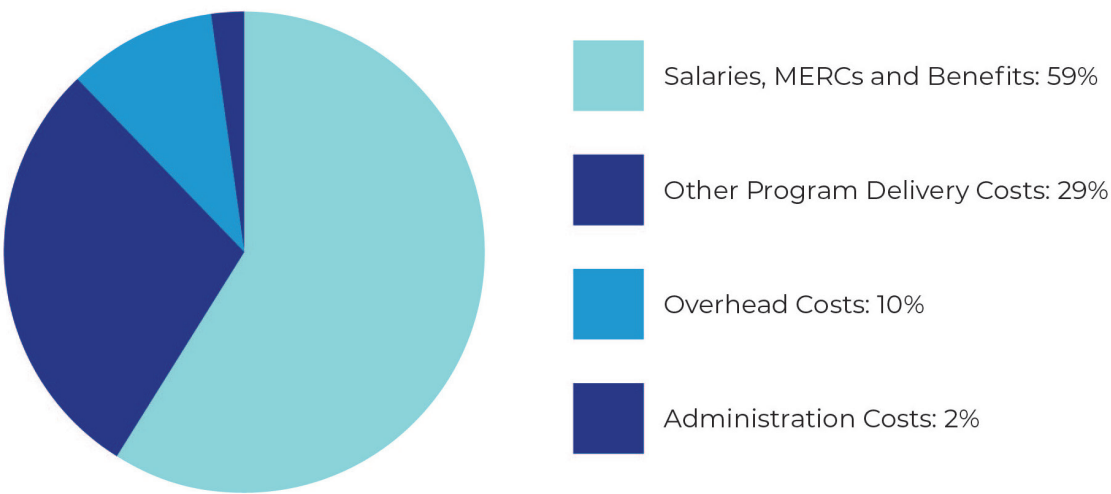
FEDERAL GRANTS BREAKDOWN



AIMGA MEMBERSHIP FEES BREAKDOWN



PROGRAM DELIVERY BREAKDOWN

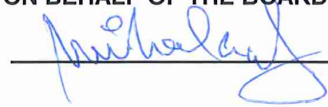


Note: Members and stakeholders who wish to view the detailed financials may request an appointment to view them at AIMGA.

ALBERTA INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES ASSOCIATION
Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2021

	2021	2020
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$ 16,993	\$ -
Accounts receivable	67,483	55,620
Goods and services tax recoverable	3,136	3,566
Prepaid expenses	6,638	11,082
	94,250	70,268
CAPITAL ASSETS (Note 2)		
	32,175	1,140
	<u>\$ 126,425</u>	<u>\$ 71,408</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Bank indebtedness	\$ -	\$ 12,112
Accounts payable	15,750	21,400
	15,750	33,512
DEFERRED REVENUE		
	27,142	-
	<u>42,892</u>	<u>33,512</u>
NET ASSETS		
Invested in capital assets	32,175	1,141
Unrestricted fund	51,358	36,755
	83,533	37,896
	<u>\$ 126,425</u>	<u>\$ 71,408</u>

LEASE COMMITMENTS (Note 3)
ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE (Note 4)

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD
 Director

Director

See notes to financial statements
Lockhart LLP



OUR MEMBERS
AT-A-GLANCE

Last updated: November 24, 2021

AIMGA HAS 1200+ MEMBERS



481
Calgary

251
Edmonton

90
Rural Alberta

157
Out of province

TOP 5
SPECIALTIES



548
Family
Medicine

58
Internal
Medicine

48
OBGYN

43
Pediatrics

29
Surgery

TOP 5
COUNTRIES
OF ORIGIN



295
Nigeria

142
Pakistan

88
India

43
Egypt

35
Bangladesh

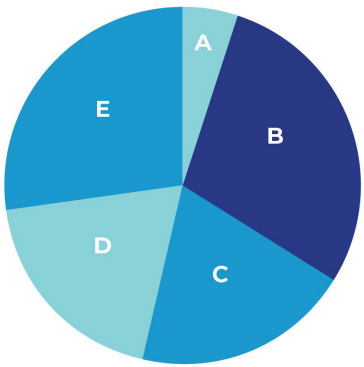


667
Female



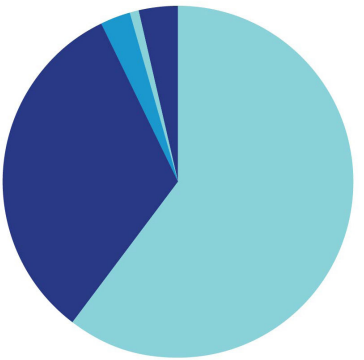
310
Male

YEARS IN CANADA



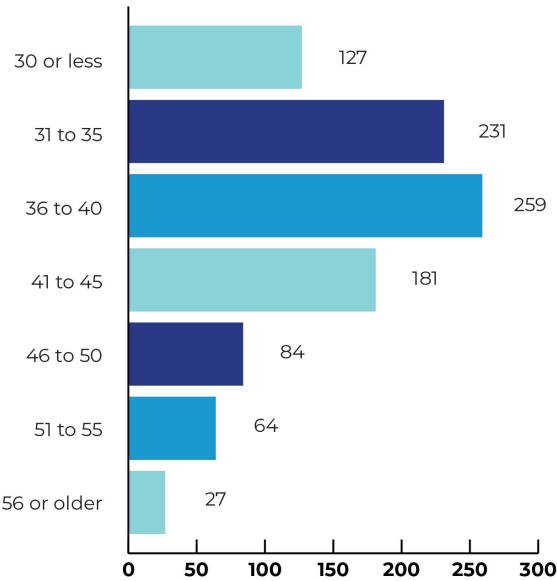
- A: Less than 1 year = 40
- B: 1 to 2 years = 224
- C: 3 to 4 years = 154
- D: 5 to 7 years = 150
- E: 8+ years = 210

CITIZENSHIP STATUS



- A: Permanent resident = 592
- B: Canadian citizen = 317
- C: Temporary resident = 27
- D: Refugee = 10
- E: Other = 33

AGE RANGE



AIMGA PROGRAMS & SERVICES

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

AIMGA hosts a New Member Orientation (NMO) which is mandatory for all new AIMGA members. The NMO provides an overview of the pathways to licensure and their requirements as well as an overview of all AIMGA services and programs. The purpose of this session is to provide an understanding of AIMGA and to help determine which pathways and programs are most suitable in members' next steps towards integration.

STUDY GROUPS FOR LICENSING EXAMINATIONS

The moderated Study Groups for Canada's medical licensing examinations present an excellent opportunity for IMGs to connect with peers and to work together to prepare for their medical exams. Study Groups are typically moderated by a volunteer IMG who is interested in assuming the responsibility to facilitate the learning of their fellows. The volunteer is someone who has demonstrated a high level of success on the exam.

AIMGA organizes study groups for MCCQE1, TDM and NAC OSCE. These groups are supported by clinical workshops that are open to study group members. Workshops may include an overview of common cases in the following areas: Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Emergency Medicine, MSK, and Obstetrics/Gynaecology. Other workshops include: communication skills such as dealing with difficult patients and breaking bad news.

OSCE PREPARATION COURSE

The OSCE Preparation Course is a 2-day preparation program. The first day includes an overview of the exam, a hands-on workshop focused on scenario-based training to practice clinical, procedural, and communication skills. The second day includes a mock OSCE where candidates are rated by examiners using clinical and communication checklists. Performances are videotaped for educational and preparation purposes. Following the mock exam, there is a group feedback session where examiners share their observations and provide tips and strategies for success on the OSCE.

MMI PREPARATION COURSE

The Multiple-Mini Interview (MMI) Preparation Course is a 2-day preparation course. The first day includes an educational component where candidates are exposed to different question types and strategies for responding. This session includes various sample scenarios. The second day includes a mock MMI where candidates are evaluated and videotaped. This session ends with a group feedback session where examiners are asked to share their observations and provide tips for success on the MMI.

OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM

AIMGA's Observership Program is open throughout the year and accommodates IMGs who qualify for program participation. The observerships are an important step of the residency application process as they offer an excellent opportunity for IMGs to learn in the specific context of the Canadian healthcare system, to increase knowledge, to build professional networks and to obtain feedback from licensed Alberta physicians and medical educators.

IELTS PREPARATION PROGRAM

The IELTS preparation course at AIMGA is designed for IMGs who need to enhance their language skills and develop test-taking strategies in order to achieve the required IELTS score and meet the language proficiency requirements for the licensure process. The course content mirrors the IELTS Academic specific language tasks with a focus on each of the language skills. The problems with grammar and sentence structure needed for improving writing scores are discussed in detail. Practice tests with an emphasis on common errors are included for IMG test takers in all strands: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. Additional time is spent on the area of writing.

CaRMS PREPARATION PROGRAM

The CaRMS Preparation Program assists IMGs to understand the organizational structure of the Canadian healthcare system and the essential skills and knowledge required to function as

a physician within that system. This training is highly recommended for those applying for residency through CaRMS or the Practice Readiness Assessment routes as it provides details on the CaRMS application process including CanMEDS, CVs, Personal Statements, and residency interviews. These services are also provided through workshops and our one-to-one consults.

CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAM

The Career Transition Program (CTP) assists IMGs who are considering an alternative pathway into the Canadian healthcare system as a short or long-term career goal. The program aims to increase IMGs' overall knowledge and awareness of alternative career pathways through a series of employment related workshops, mentoring events, mentorship circles, one-on-one coaching sessions, and an observership opportunity.

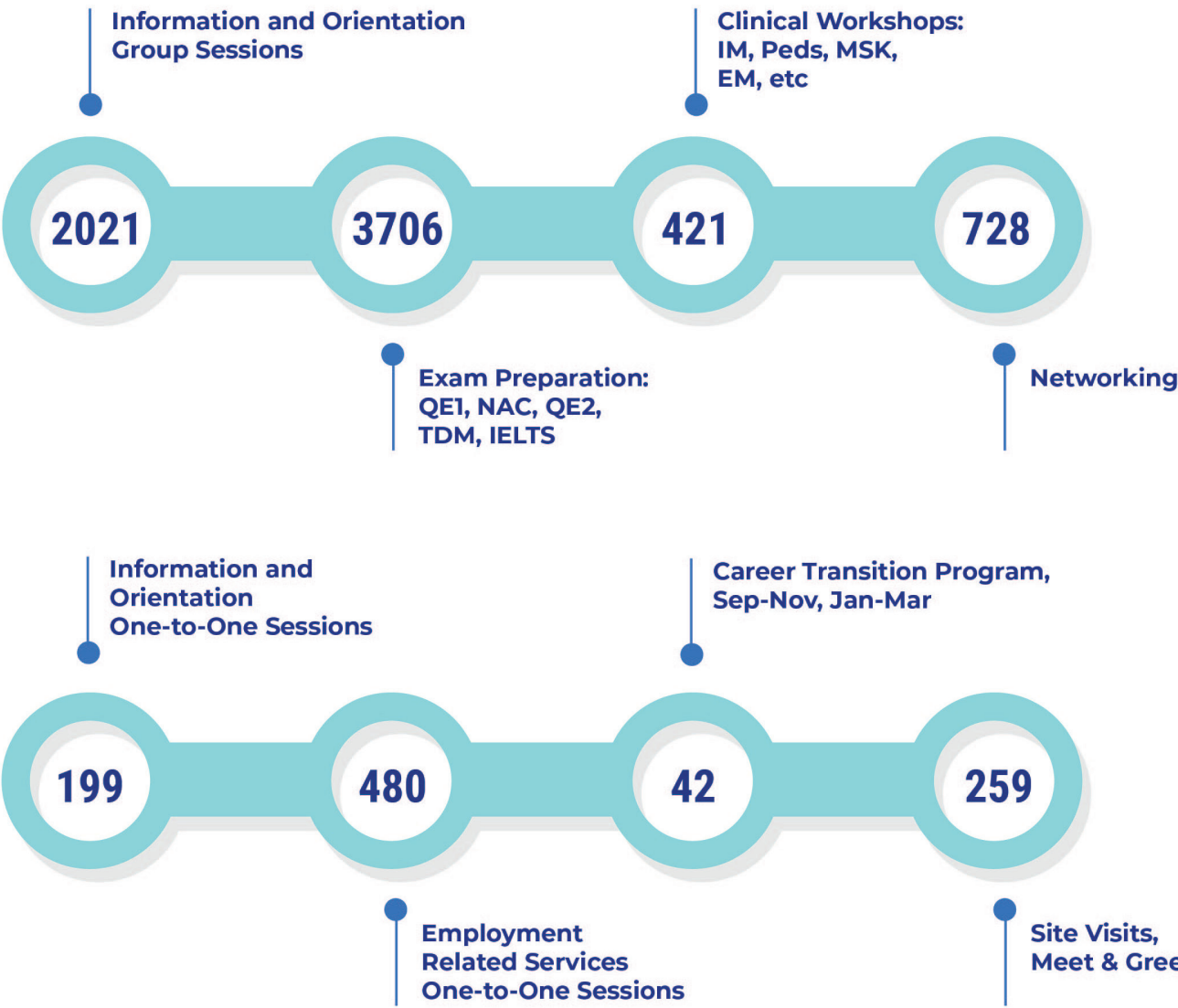
LECTURES & WORKSHOPS

AIMGA offers a variety of lectures and workshops throughout the year based on the needs of IMGs. For example, clinical workshops to support study groups, workshops to support those applying for CaRMS, workshops to support those selected for residency, and workshops related to research or professional development.

LUNCH & LEARN / NETWORKING SESSIONS

Lunch & Learn and Networking sessions are informal sessions for our members to network with one another and to learn about a topic of interest. For example sessions may be related to an upcoming program, a research study being conducted, a support service, a community based program, or an activity to facilitate discussion. These sessions are offered monthly.

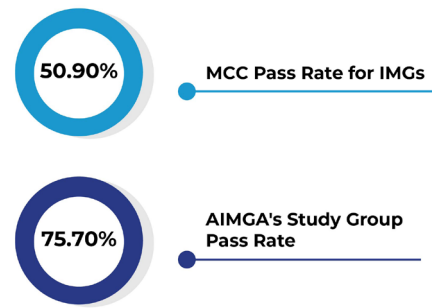
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS/SEATS



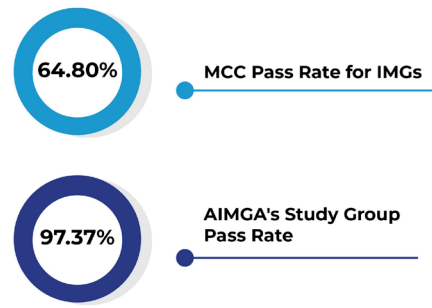
AIMGA'S SUCCESSIONS

AIMGA'S SUCCESS IN MCC EXAMS:

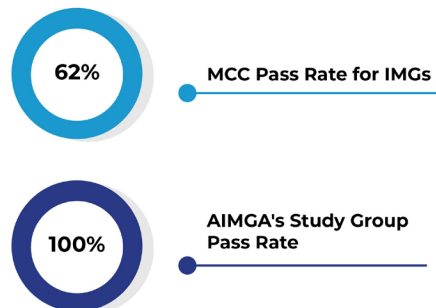
Success in QE1:



Success in NAC-OSCE:



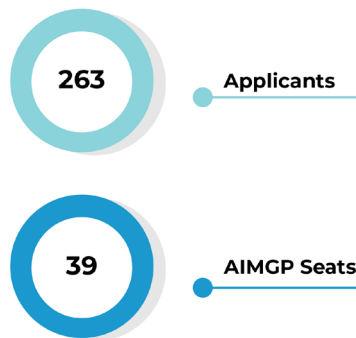
Success in TDM:



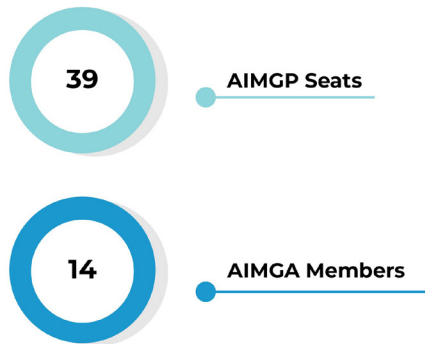
MCC Pass rates taken from their website. AIMGA pass rates are derived from those who completed the annual survey and/or milestones report.

SUCCESS IN AIMGP (Alberta Match Rate):

2021 AIMGP Overall Match Rate: 15%

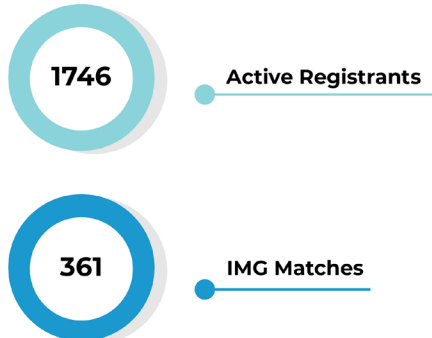


2021 Match Rate of AIMGA members in AIMGP: 36%

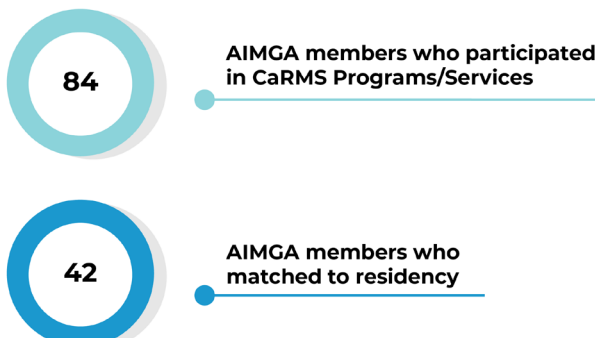


SUCCESS IN CaRMS (National Match Rate):

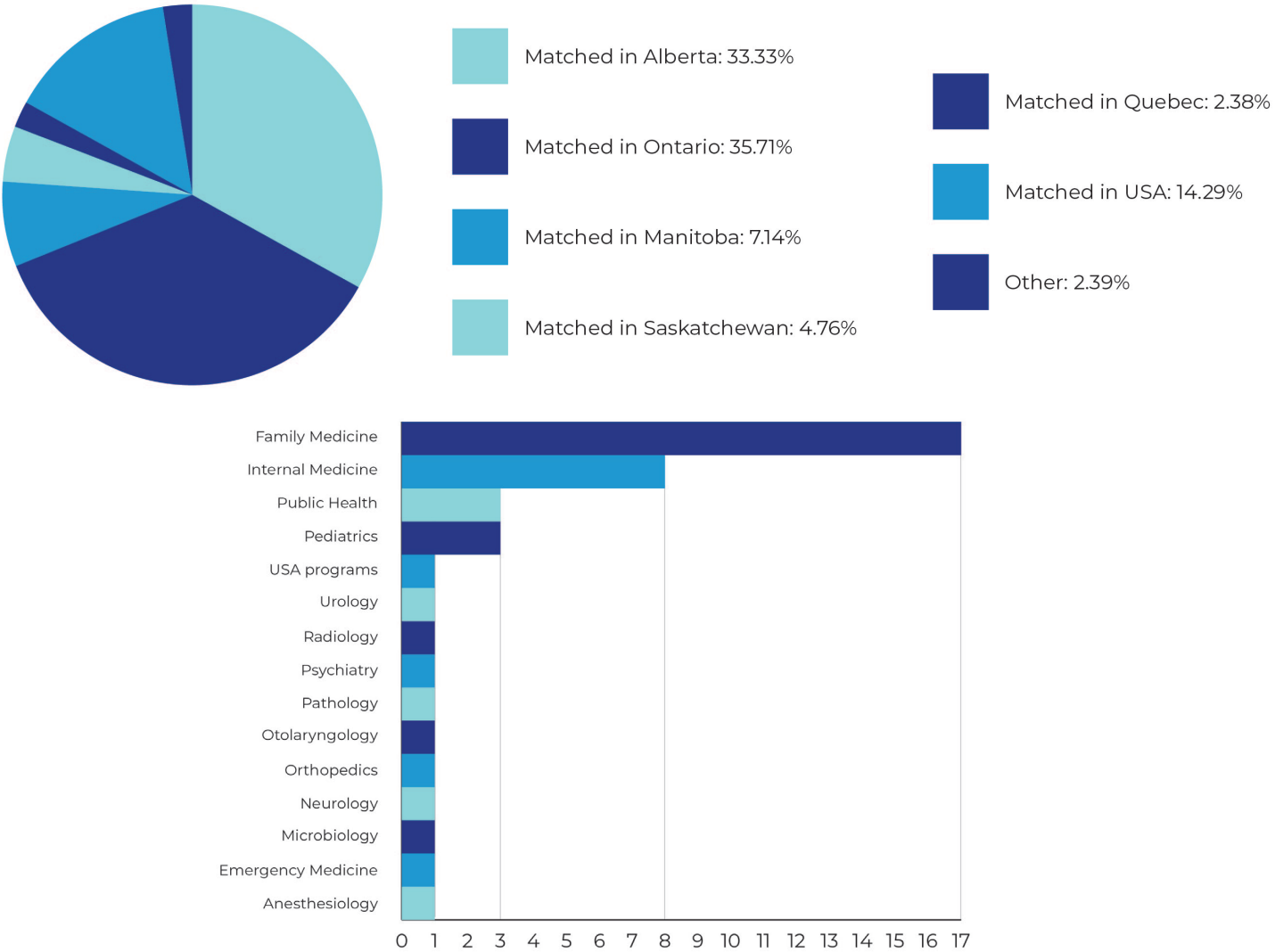
2021 CaRMS Match Rate: 20.6%



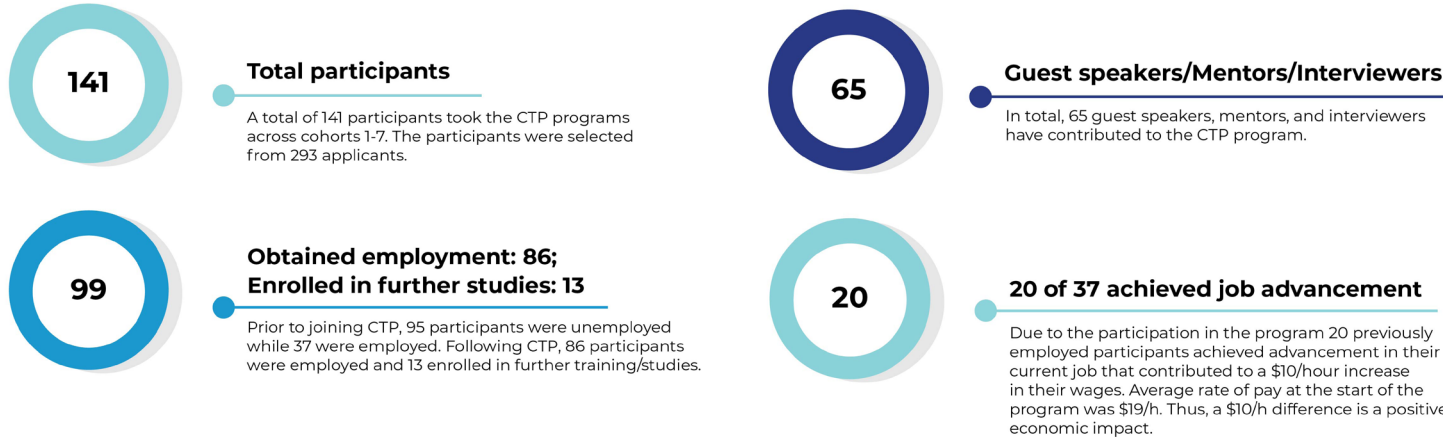
2021 AIMGA Residency Match Rate: 50%



RESIDENCY MATCHES (N=42):



CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAM: COHORTS 1-7



FEATURE
ARTICLE

Launch of the HealthHub

The groundwork before COVID-19:

Prior to the pandemic, AIMGA had been meeting with community stakeholders on how to better utilize the skills and knowledge of International Medical Graduates (IMGs) in community. Our Executive Director implemented a “think tank” to explore this question. Dr. Turin Tanvir Chowdhury in Community Medicine at the University of Calgary was part of these discussions and based on synergies between our interests between the advancement of IMGs and the health outcomes of newcomers, AIMGA and UofC formed a partnership to analyze how IMGs could improve the health and wellness of newcomer communities. Our Executive Director believes in the economic and social integration of our members in both the healthcare system and community. Becoming licensed can take several years and during this time, the skills and knowledge of IMGs remain underutilized and newcomer communities continue to grow in Canada. Newcomers to Canada often encounter a myriad of barriers navigating health and wellness services in Canada largely due to language and communication differences, a lack of understanding of the health system, cultural competence, high prevalence of certain chronic diseases among some communities, and a lack of health literacy. We posit that IMGs, given their health-related knowledge, can help newcomers navigate health and wellness services and improve health literacy.

We conducted a Canada-wide survey of over 1,700 IMGs to understand their barriers, facilitators, interest, and the areas where IMGs employ their skills and knowledge to improve the health and wellbeing of the community. This analysis and manuscript is ongoing; however, we found 72.75% of IMGs reported that they were involved with improving community health and wellness and about one-third (32.77%) were able to conduct health-related knowledge mobilization activities such as workshops, posters, etc. 72.81% showed interest in knowledge mobilization activities for the community health and wellness. However, several barriers were noted and among those lack of resources (25.45%), time (23.30%), financial constraints (20.35%), and lack of community support (15.65%) were highlighted. This shows while IMGs are quite interested in contributing to community health and wellness, they have many barriers preventing them from doing this on their own.

In addition, only 19.82% indicated having some sort of training for knowledge mobilization in the community. Thus, AIMGA has made substantive efforts to provide a platform, resources, training, and support, to IMGs to be able to employ their knowledge and skills to improve the health and wellness of newcomer communities. Hence, the launch of AIMGA’s HealthHub for Newcomers.

COVID-19 kick-starting the HealthHub:

AIMGA created a COVID-19 Response Team when asked by Alberta Health Services to be a part of its community task force in the Cargill Food outbreak. Throughout the pandemic, AIMGA’s team and activities grew. AIMGA has been actively supporting community members, community partners, and Alberta Health Services. In December 2020, the Calgary East-zone Newcomer Collaborative (CENC) was formed to which AIMGA belonged. We later supported AHS and the Mosaic PCN during vaccine clinics at these sites. Through CENC, we worked closely with The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) and ActionDignity to support the collaborative. We conducted follow up surveys with recipients based on the services and supports they received and we called over 3,000 clients to respond to questions surrounding COVID and the vaccine. We’ve also been supporting refugee clients of the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) to address vaccine hesitancy and to increase vaccine uptake. We have been working closely with the Mosaic Primary Care Network and Alberta Health Services to offer educational supports and community townhalls in various languages. We worked with the Centre for Newcomers (CFN) to support community, walk-in, vaccine clinics in the NE and more recently, we’ve been supporting the City of Calgary with their mobile vaccine clinics. Throughout this time, the COVID Response team became the Health and Wellness team and the HealthHub for Newcomers was launched in the beginning of 2021.

Support from the Public Health Agency of Canada boosting the HealthHub activities:

AIMGA was awarded funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) through the Immunization Partnership Fund (IPF). The title of the project, ‘Improving COVID-19 Vaccine Literacy and Acceptancy among newcomers’ afforded AIMGA the opportunity to provide community supports in collaboration with



our community partners from June 1st, 2021 to May 31st, 2022. This not only allowed us to have greater impact on increasing COVID-19 vaccine uptake in newcomer communities, it allowed us to provide compensation to the IMGs who had been dedicating their valuable time to these various educational activities and supports as volunteers. We are very grateful for the supports of our partners and collaborators including the Calgary East Zone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC), Alberta Health Services (AHS), Mosaic Primary Care Network, City of Calgary, COVID-19 pandemic Response and Impact Grant for Quality Improvement (CORIG-QI), Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), 19 To Zero, Edmonton COVID-19 Rapid Response Collaborative (ECRRC), and the University of Calgary.

With the support of this funding, we have been able to offer tailored interventions to increase vaccine literacy and improve underserved newcomers to Alberta access to vaccination. Interventions included practical aids such as booking vaccine appointments, providing appointment reminders, supporting with transportation to and from vaccine appointments. We also created multi-lingual educational supports such as community-based forums, video-mediated resources, podcasts, campaigns, workplace educational sessions, walk-in clinics, and presentations to those enrolled in language instruction classes. We have been working with community partners to conduct educational sessions in both English and first languages via Zoom, in-person at community events, and at various workplaces.

Project activities

Our health and wellness team has grown from approximately 30 members at the onset to over 100 active members and 150 member followers. Having so many enthusiast and dedicated IMGs, we were able

to provide continuous support to the community to combat COVID-19 and promote its vaccines.

Most of 2020 and the earlier part of 2021, we were mainly providing support to the COVID-19 affected people. The newcomer population struggled to understand the ever-changing public health regulations. We have been creating videos, webinars, and podcasts in multiple language and in a way that they can understand and that are culturally appropriate. We were checking in on the households affected by COVID-19 and in need of information support. We also connected them to the appropriate available services for food hampers, isolation, transportation and other supports such as counselling and so on.

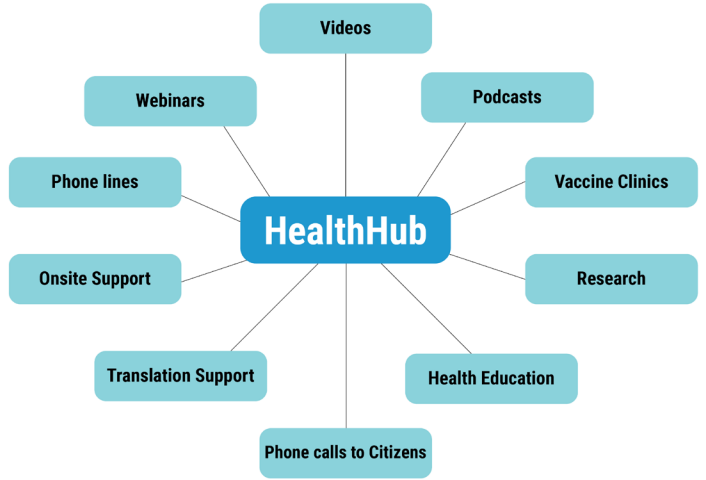


Figure 1. The role of IMGs play in our health and wellness team

Since late 2020 when vaccines started to become available, we focused on promotion of vaccines. There was lots of misinformation and uncertainty around COVID-19 vaccines and it was evident newcomer communities needed information in their language, in their way of understanding, and from someone they trusted and could communicate with. Our team members stepped up with making vaccine promotional videos, webinars, and podcasts in over 25 languages as well as on-site vaccine navigation and educational supports. Our members have participated in over 1,170 activities since April 2020. We have initiated a HealthHub phone line where anyone can call and ask any COVID-19 and its vaccine related questions in over 25 languages as over 100 health and wellness team members signed up to provide the support through the phone line whenever needed. They have also contributed to translating educational materials for AHS, PCN, and our partner organizations. More than 80 of our members were recruited by AHS as contact tracers and they played a big role in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in Alberta.

FEATURE
ARTICLE

Launch of the HealthHub

Our members also collaborated in several research projects such as the COVID-19 pandemic Response and Impact Grant for Quality Improvement (CORIGQI) project, University of Calgary’s research projects on the mental health effect of racialized communities, Calgary East Zone Newcomers Collaborative (CENC), and others.

For example, in a study of mental health effects of COVID-19 on essential workers our members have conducted a survey of 657 essential workers and a scoping review of literature drawing on from the literature on previous pandemics and large scale outbreaks.

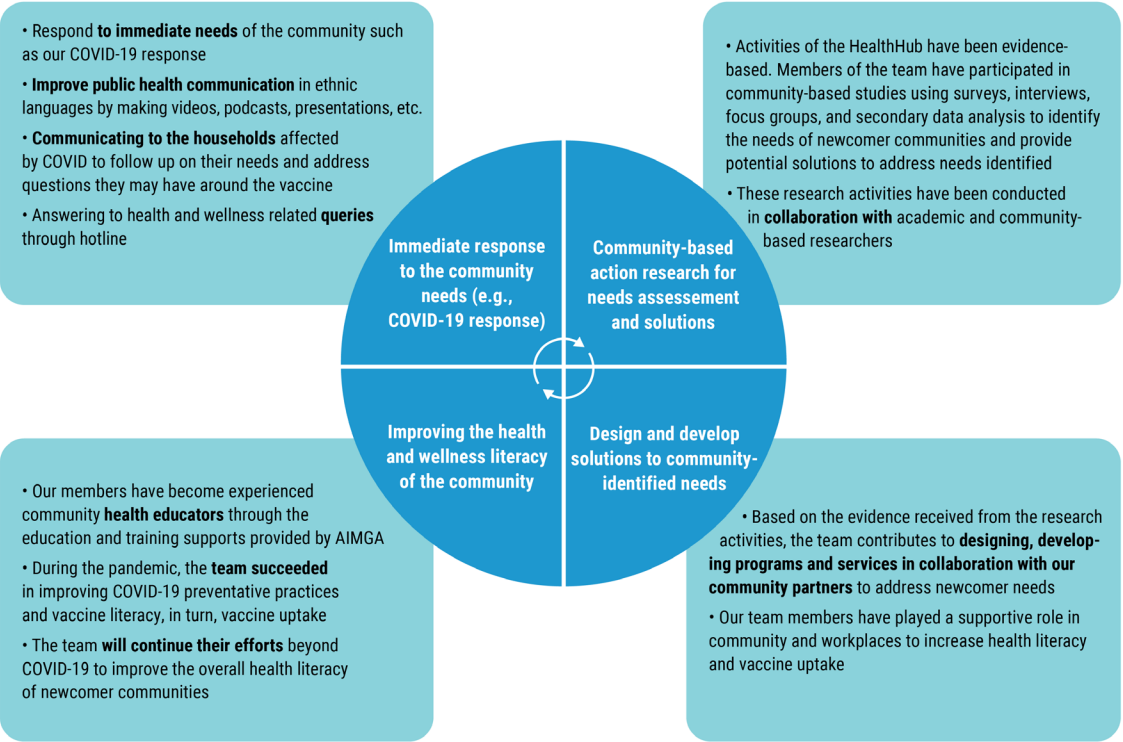


Figure 2. The activity outline of the health and wellness team.



Outreach

Along with live participation in our webinars and presentations, videos, uploaded webinars, and audio podcasts have quite an outreach. Through our social media outlets, our content was shared and reached thousands of people in Alberta.

The range and the number of activities of our health and wellness team increased as we gained success, momentum, and support from our partners.

AIMGA has provided supports in over 20 languages

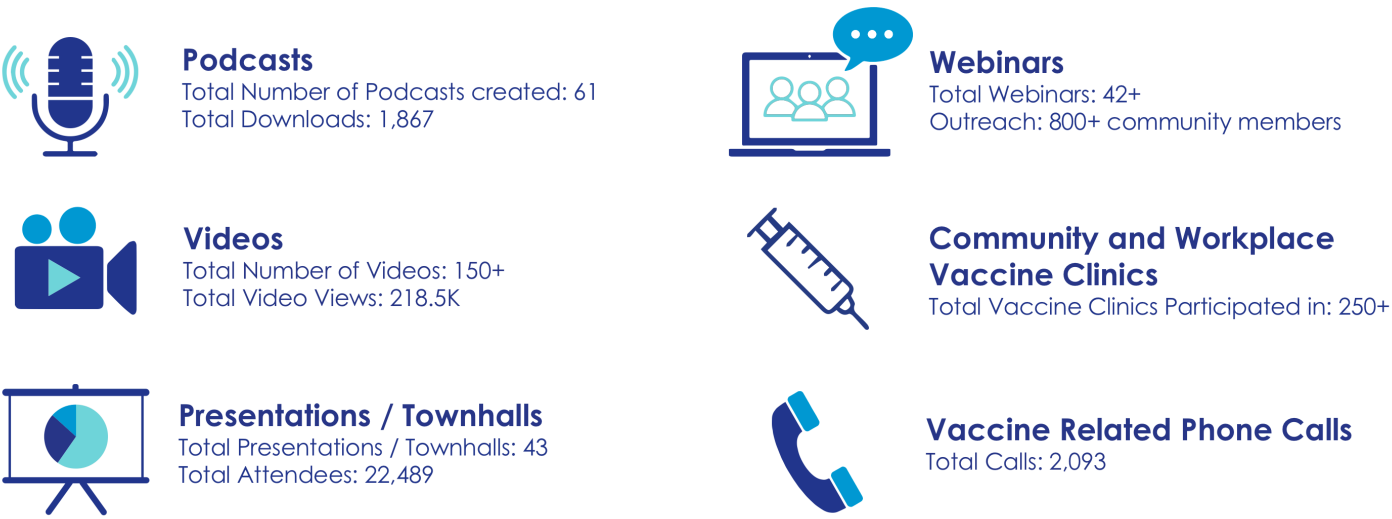


Figure 3. The range and outreach of some key health and wellness team activities

Next steps

We believe, leveraging on this model achieved through responding through COVID-19 is a sustainable model for improving general health navigation and health literacy including flu and other available vaccine awareness. Our IMG members are a stable pool of human resources. We have over 1,000 active members and this number continues to grow. These IMG members are keen to contribute and AIMGA is excited to announce its upcoming patient navigator/

community health ambassador training in the New Year. We look forward to furthering our collaborations with local community-based organizations and newcomer service providers. We believe that continuing to work in collaboration, this model will be able to improve the health literacy of newcomer communities, thus improving their overall healthcare access, utilization, and lifestyles. We also believe our efforts will have a positive impact on the career advancement of IMGs.

Authors: Nashit Chowdhury^{1,2}, Deidre Lake²

1. Immigrant and Refugee Health Interest Group, Department of Family Medicine, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada
2. Alberta International Medical Graduate Association, Canada

FEATURE
ARTICLE

Alternative Career Pathways for IMGs:
The Dilemma of “to choose, not to choose,
or how to choose” Alternative Careers

Authors: Dr. Turin Tanvir Chowdhury (UofC), Deidre Lake (AIMGA), Nashit Chowdhury (UofC & AIMGA)

Lost in Transition: “Brain Drain”, “Brain Gain”,
& “Brain Waste”

Canada and the US have been destinations for immigrant scientists and technologists from European countries since the early 50s and 60s. This emigration shift has been referred to as the “brain drain” by the countries from which these highly-skilled workers departed. This trend of movement of highly skilled people to a new country benefitted the destination country as they received skilled citizens who could readily contribute towards the growth of the country; however, often created a deficit in their countries of origin. The benefit for these recipient countries through immigration of a skilled population on the other hand is known as the “brain gain”. This trend has continued, and we have been experiencing an increased volume of immigration of highly qualified professionals from developing countries to the developed countries of the west. Developed countries often create immigration policies to attract skilled applicants based on their country’s needs. Though immigrants benefit from social security and safer lives, integration into a career that reflect their skillsets or qualifications can prove to be a challenge. These professionals are particularly vulnerable in the host country’s job market and a large proportion of them fail to re-enter or transition to their original occupation or use their skills to their full potential and thus never realize their full economic or societal potential in their newly adopted country known as “brain waste”.

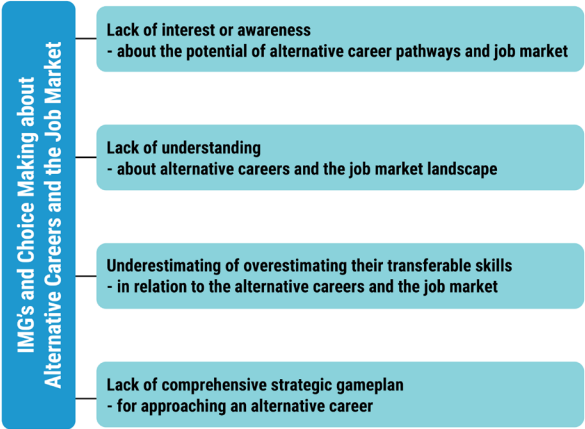
Immigration and Job Market Integration
of IMGs as Medical Professionals:

International Medical Graduates (IMG) are physicians who have graduated from a medical school outside of the country to which they have immigrated. IMGs are also among those who have been immigrating to Canada in large numbers in recent decades. They are a very distinct group of high-skilled immigrants whose skills are very specific and might not immediately appear to be transferable to any other profession or career. Upon arriving in Canada, IMGs who want to pursue clinical practice need to go through the licencing process by completing prescribed exams, obtaining required communication proficiency levels, and, finally, competing for a limited number of residency seats if they do not qualify for direct entry or practice readiness

routes. Residency opportunities involve a quota system. For example, in Alberta, there are approximately 250 eligible applicants per year for 38 to 40 positions made available to IMGs. In recent years, residency-training opportunities for IMGs have become more competitive across Canada. On one hand, the number of seats is declining while on the other hand the applicant pool is growing. This dichotomy contributes to a bottleneck scenario resulting in only a handful of these professionals integrating into the Canadian job market as physicians. Others need to choose jobs or career pathways that do not exactly match their previous education and training. It should not be forgotten that this process also causes those left behind to suffer socially, economically and mentally and that the right types of supports and resources are needed for this type of career transition.

Alternative Careers for IMGs: The Dilemma of
“to Choose or not to Choose Alternative Careers”

In the current scenario, a significant proportion of IMGs have difficulty successfully navigating the physician pathway leaving the majority of immigrant IMGs to seek other career opportunities in different fields. The job-market integration of IMGs through alternative career options has been relatively unexplored. There have been few initiatives like those undertaken by the Alberta International Medical Graduate Association (AIMGA) that look into career transition and find ways to facilitate IMGs’ job-market integration. As a part of this approach, there are a few issues that require further exploration to better understand in a systematic way how to facilitate the decision-making process about future career choices for IMGs and aid in their skill development towards successful transitions.



(1) lack of interest or awareness about alternative
careers among IMGs:

There seems to be lack of awareness among the IMGs about alternative career pathways (ACP). They tend to handle this on-the-fly. For example, IMGs try to gain employment based on their immediate connections or instantaneous assessments of opportunities available around them. They tend to have limited ideas of the landscape of suitable jobs in job sectors. This might also be explained by their dedicated focus on chasing the dream of becoming a practicing physician in Canada. Therefore, they don’t focus on alternatives that could lead to greater awareness and opportunities.

(2) lack of understanding of the alternative job
market landscape:

IMGs often made a decision to become physicians at an early stage. Their career identities were foreclosed meaning they never explored other options or ideas. Their lives have centered around becoming a doctor in their home countries where they obtained jobs easily upon graduation in their intended careers as healthcare providers. It, therefore, makes sense that they have had limited exposure and experience in exploring an expanded horizon of jobs. ACP jobs can range from medical office administration to research which presents a huge variability. All these jobs have varying profiles, have their own skill requirements, and different criteria. Without having a decent understanding of these positions, making choices becomes difficult and sometime the possibilities of targeting and approaching a job that might not be that suitable arise.

(3) Underestimating or overestimating their
transferable skills:

Similar to other highly skilled professionals, IMGs have very specific types of knowledge and skills gained through their education and training. It’s quite interesting that their transferable skills are not well understood by IMGs. That’s probably due to a nonsystematic way of thinking about transferable skills. For some their transferable skills are underestimated while in others they are overestimated, resulting in attempts to oversell these skills, which leads to a poor application, interview or on-the-job performance. This problem can be handled through proper supports such as AIMGA’s Career Transition Program for IMGs and reflection of one’s transferable skills. Once these skills are properly identified and combined with appropriate job search strategies and a carefully executed career plan, their job search activities become more relevant and focused resulting in informed decisions about their future careers.

(4) Lack of a comprehensive, strategic game plan
for approaching an alternative career:

The lack of proper understanding about the job market as well as lack of clear understanding where they themselves stand as candidates compared to other candidates, impact IMGs’ preparation for any job application or interview. A number of IMGs apply for different jobs without employing any real effort towards preparing themselves for the target-job in a suitable way. By not identifying which sections of their portfolio they need to develop further to be a competitive job applicant deters them away from opportunities for self-development and becoming competitive candidates. This is often a result of cultural differences in the job search process and not truly knowing what employers are seeking. In their home countries, physicians never had to endure such a process to be marketable so to employ these skills in a new country and different culture can often be daunting. When IMGs are equipped with the right tools, understand the job market and what employers are seeking, and can clearly articulate their skill set, their career trajectory changes for the better.

The Need for Systematic Career Counselling
and/or Decision Support Tool

The immigrant serving organizations in Canada have programs for career counselling for immigrants where career counselors help newcomers to find and apply for jobs based on their needs, desire, and situations. But these programs and career counsellors typically do not have a proper understanding of the unique situation around IMGs, their skill sets and their potential. During consultations with immigrant serving agency conventional career counsellors, IMGs have been pushed towards survival-level, unskilled jobs. The overall goal of ACP career counselling needs to focus on a strategic approach to identifying jobs through overcoming the skill mismatch that the IMGs face. When approaching an alternative career, IMGs often fail to understand the skill-gaps, or overlook their transferable skills. Furthermore, the need to make a living and the lack of appropriate supports and guidance is often why IMGs get stuck when resettling in a new country. A decision support tool based on matching transferable skill sets to the potential job as well as the right kinds of targeted support and understanding of skill sets IMGs possess is something AIMGA is exploring through its Career Transition Program and research around alternative career pathways of IMGs. The career decision making tool in progress aims to: 1) make this decision-making process an easier one, 2) provide the right kinds of guidance based on the focus groups we’ve conducted, and 3) lead to better informed choices, faster integration, and success.

MEMBER
TESTIMONIALS

Ileapigie Lamai Thanks a million!
I want to sincerely thank you for all you do for us at AIMGA. I am so delighted to see my IELTS results following the classes AIMGA organized as they made the difference and I achieved the score I needed. Writing is no longer an obstacle. Thanks a million!

Tasmira Mohib AIMGA's study group really helped me. I have passed QE1 and I want to show my gratitude toward AIMGA. AIMGA's study group really helped me by providing the materials needed to prepare myself and the group discussions helped me to clarify the various topics particularly the portion on ethics. I am really thankful to AIMGA and I hope they continue providing this support for future IMGs.

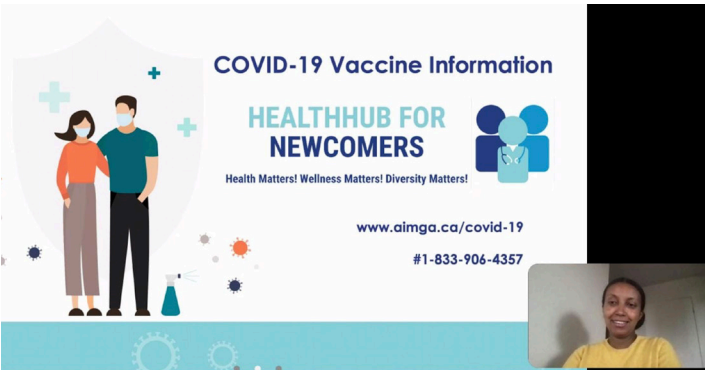
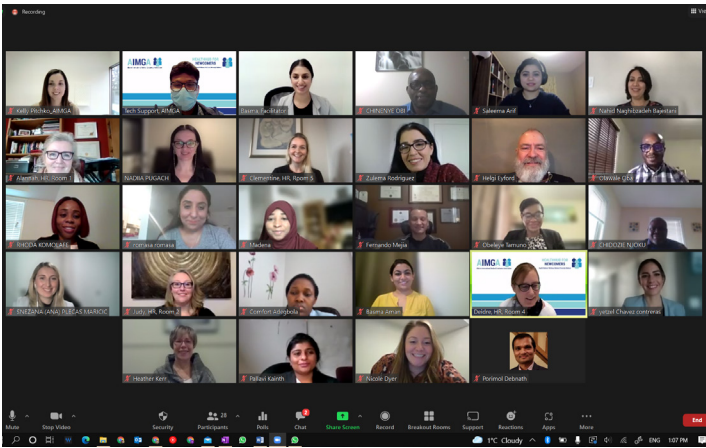
Faiza Saeed I want to pay my thanks to Deidre and whole team and especially to Dr. Bruce Fisher for conducting wonderful and very informative NAC OSCE preparation sessions. I benefited a lot from AIMGA's QE1 study groups and I'm hoping that the NAC OSCE study groups will also be very helpful for me in my upcoming NAC exam. Once again, thank you very much for always being there for IMGs and for bringing highly knowledgeable educators such as Dr. Fisher for our learning.

Aurelio (Jun) Naraval Wow this is so great! Let me express my thanks and gratitude to AIMGA for the excellent work you do to improve vaccination access. You have a powerful story to tell of how you are able to empower people to take the jab! Thanks for sharing, Deidre. Will keep in touch.

Segun Oladele The NAC mock exam had an immense, invaluable contribution to my success I want to express my appreciation for the unwavering and unlimited support I enjoyed in preparation for MCCQE1 and NAC OSCE exams. AIMGA preparatory classes and importantly NAC mock exam had an immense, invaluable contribution to the success I achieved in the exams. Dr. Nuruddin, I appreciate your courteous, polite, insightful, focused and mindful coordination of the online zoom meetings. The online Zoom meetings made participation feasible for many and we pray it continues. Appreciation to all AIMGA members of staff for their selfless contribution in helping IMGs achieve their dream.

Nuruddin Lakhani "AIMGA has played a significant role in my settlement in Canada extending beyond exam preparation and guidance on the licensure process. What AIMGA has done is to take a holistic approach in preparing me for employment in Canada through many ways, most notably the Career Transition Program. Words are not enough to express my gratitude to AIMGA, Deidre and the whole AIMGA staff for their constant and kind support during this journey."

Mayor Naheed Nenshi "We are writing to you on behalf of The City of Calgary to express our gratitude to the Alberta International Medical Graduates Association for being a critical partner during the COVID-19 response effort. Your enthusiastic support of the COVID-19 mobile vaccination outreach program has had such a positive impact in the community and for that we are thankful."



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

6:30-7:30PM

- Cuban percussion to open the event
- Welcome and introduction of event emcee
- Land Acknowledgement
- Opening remarks from Seyi Akinola, one of AIMGA’s IMGs
- Board Chair report by Jennifer Garcia
- Executive Director report by Deidre Lake
- Special thanks to our HealthHub team members
- Financial Report by Dorin Michalache
- “Fly Me to the Moon”, Performance by Ahmed Hodelin
- Years of Recognition
- Raffle Draw
- Closing remarks
- Holiday song by Funmi Dominic Olaoye, one of AIMGA’s IMGs

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

AIMGA IS FUNDED BY:



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and Citizenship Canada



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