



Dr. Dennis A. Kendel Distinguished Service Award for 2020 Presented to Dr. Chris Ekong

SASKATOON, December 14, 2020 – During a meeting of the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) held on November 20th, 2020, the members of Council selected this year’s recipient of the prestigious *Dr. Dennis A. Kendel Distinguished Service Award* for outstanding contributions to physician leadership and to physician engagement in quality improvements in health care in Saskatchewan.

It is with great pleasure that the Council announces that the 2020 edition of this coveted prize has been awarded to Dr. Chris E.U. Ekong, who has served in various physician leadership and committee roles in the province during his more than three decades as a neurosurgeon in Regina (see attached biography).

“Dr. Ekong has led an exemplary career and contributed to significant advancements in his field, including improving national recognition for Saskatchewan Neurosurgery, while giving much of his time to spearheading initiatives that would help children in need and train neurosurgeons in developing countries. Council is pleased to present this award to this deserving individual,” stated Dr. Brian Brownbridge, President of the College Council. “

“To quote Jonas Salk - The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more. Thank you for giving me the platform to do **more** locally and globally,” said Dr. Ekong.



Dr. Chris Ekong
2020 Kendel Award
recipient.

A Clinical Professor and mentor with more than 100 published papers, abstracts and presentations locally and internationally, Dr. Ekong was instrumental in the establishment of the Medi-Fax grand round series, which brought together surgeons from all across Canada to discuss interesting cases, an initiative that was later expanded into a Global Outreach Program. He has also been working with neurosurgery groups in developing countries and in this context, established a philanthropic trust to improve neurosurgical care and technological advancements through Internet and in-person observerships, illustrating his incredible dedication to the profession both at home and worldwide.

Dr. Ekong also established a private charity which helps fund the technological needs of religious, school, and health institutions in Canada and abroad, including *The Purple Computer Project*, whose aim is to raise money to buy and donate 100,000 computers to community centres in 100 countries over 10 years. He has personally held computer workshops with youth in several of those countries.

Due to the pandemic situation, the traditional award dinner and official ceremony has been postponed to an undetermined date. In the meantime, please join us in congratulating Dr. Ekong for this accomplishment!



The Dr. Dennis A. Kendel Distinguished Service Award was named in honour of Dr. Dennis Kendel, who retired in 2011 after a long career as Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan. Past recipients are Dr. Werner Oberholzer and Dr. Nelly Helms (2012), Dr. Marilyn Baetz (2013), Dr. William Albritton (2014), Dr. Ryan Meili and Dr. Mark Wahba (2015), Dr. Corrine Jabs (2016), Dr. Susan Shaw (2017), Dr. Morris Markentin (2018), and Dr. Bruce Cload (2019).

*The mission of the **College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan** is to serve the public by regulating the practice of medicine and guiding the profession to achieve the highest standards of care. It currently issues licenses to over 2500 physicians and surgeons in the province, as well as over 1800 corporate permits.*

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Encl. : Dr. Ekong Biography



2020



Dr. Chris E. U. Ekong

Dr. Chris Ekong completed his medical degree at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria in 1972, as well as his assessment with the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates. He worked at the University of Ibadan as a House Officer (1972-73) and as Senior House Officer (1973-74) in Nigeria before heading to Canada for specialty training in Neurosurgery in Saskatoon and Toronto. After completing his Specialist Certification in Neurosurgery in Toronto in 1981, he stayed on to do a post residency Fellowship in Neurotrauma at the Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto. He took on more academic endeavors between 1981 and 2012. He is currently a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada, the International College of Surgeons, the American College of Surgeons, and is a Canadian Certified Physician Executive.

Dr. Ekong joined the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) Practitioner Staff in Regina (with cross academic position in the University of Saskatchewan) in 1982, where he has been teaching medical students and residents. He later set up a Clinical Spine Fellowship program in Regina. He subsequently served as Interim Lead, Division of Neurosurgery in Regina for over 10 years until July 2019. He is currently Clinical Professor of Surgery (Neurosurgery) at the University of Saskatchewan, Clinical Professor of Surgery, St. George's University School of Medicine, and Adjunct Clinical Professor, American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine.

He was a board member of the Regina Regional Medical Association (2004-2006) and participated in numerous local and national committees including the Canadian Neurosurgical Society, the Saskatchewan Neurosurgical Society, the Saskatchewan Spine

His dedication, determination and commitment to residents of southern Saskatchewan are well known."

- Dr. Juliet Soper, Area Chief of Staff for the SHA in Regina

Pathway Working Group and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Examination committee. He also served for five years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

As a physician leader, and to complement his more than 100 published papers, abstracts, and presentations at local and international neurosurgical meetings, Dr. Ekong turned his attention to new horizons. He established the Medi-Fax Neurosurgical Internet Rounds series in 1996. This brought together neurosurgeons from all across Canada and the US to

*“His patients love him,
and I noticed that
many of his referrals
were a result of word-
of-mouth.”*

*- Dr. J. E. Buwembo,
Regina neurosurgeon and
clinical professor*

discuss interesting cases, challenges and ideas, and vaulted Saskatchewan Neurosurgery to greater national recognition. The initiative was done initially with teleconferencing and internet posting of medical images which expanded first to live videoconferencing rounds, then into a Global Live Outreach Program (with Indonesia, Malesia, Brazil, and Nigeria). He has also been working with neurosurgery groups in developing countries and established a philanthropic trust to improve neurosurgical collaboration and technological advancements through exchange of site visits and joint clinical research and publications. This was partly possible through a Regina-Yogyakarta neurosurgery Twinning Agreement between the

College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, and the Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, thus illustrating further his incredible dedication to the profession both at home and worldwide.

Dr. Ekong has also established a private charitable foundation which helps fund the technological needs of religious organizations, school, and health institutions in Canada and abroad, including *The Purple Computer Project*, whose aim, among others, is to raise money to buy and donate 100,000 computers to community centres in 100 countries over 10 years. He has personally held computer workshops with youth in several of those countries. He has received multiple local, national, and international awards including The Canadian Red Cross 2012 “Power of Humanity” award, a 2014 Canadian Medical Association “Honorary Member” award, and “Excellence in Global Medical Education” award from the University of Uyo, Nigeria.

*“He is one of the key mentors of my life.
[...] He is an exemplary physician from a clinical perspective. [...] He is also an excellent teacher.”*

- Dr. Michael E. Kelly, Professor of Neurosurgery, Saskatchewan Clinical Stroke Research Chair and Head – Division of Neurosurgery Royal University Hospital University of Saskatchewan
