Dear OMSA Award Committee,

Since December 2019, I have served on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Association of Physicians with Disabilities (CAPD). My priority as a member of the board has been to establish a community of medical trainees with disabilities to provide fellowship, and leadership around the unique issues encountered by disabled trainees during their medical education.

Through my efforts, I have recruited students from across Canada to form what has become known as the CAPD Trainee Group. Our group consists of a core group of 13 medical trainees who live with a variety of disabilities including mental health conditions, congenital anomalies, chronic illnesses, physical impairments and sensory impairments. These group members are working on a variety of projects related to advocacy for disabled trainees, support for trainees with disabilities, and increasing the visibility of physicians and trainees with disabilities. One of our main initiatives has been to create documents outlining how to acquire accommodations at the various stages of undergraduate medical training. These documents will provide insight to trainees who do not know what accommodations are available to them and how to go about acquiring them.

Our early efforts have focused on building capacity in our group to increase our reach across Canada. We have made connections with disability advocacy/medical student groups at the University of Toronto, the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, and Queens University. These groups have partnered to form the Canadian Medical Student Roundtable on Disability and Accessibility which will provide a forum for us to share resources, ideas, and support one another’s initiatives.

Last month we partnered with the Queen’s Disability and Accessibility Subcommittee to host a presentation by Dr. Erene Stergiopoulos, a noted disability researcher and psychiatry resident from the University of Toronto. This event was well attended with more than 40 attendees from across Canada. Participants were so enthusiastic and engaged that Dr. Stergiopoulos transitioned her presentation into an open discussion among the participants which fostered am opportunity for students to highlight their experiences in medical education and connect with students from other universities.

We have recently applied for funding from the CFMS’ Student Initiative Grant to support future presentations by physicians and trainees with disabilities and other experts around disability rights and disability justice in the context of medical education. We are also in the process of applying for a larger grant to support the development of a national curriculum on disability justice and anti-ableist practice for medical students, and support a podcast to increase the visibility of trainees and physicians with disabilities.

The community, which I have helped establish, will exist longitudinally and benefit trainees with disabilities, and those undergraduate students with disabilities who are considering a career in medicine, to feel supported throughout the undergraduate medical education process. Further, our education efforts will aid future practitioners in better understanding the experiences of people with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration for this award.

Sincerely,

Quinten Clarke