

VOL. 1 ISSUE 3 · JUL 2024

# WONCA POLARIS POST

Official Newsletter of WONCA Polaris



## Happy 10th Birthday Polaris!

Hey everyone, exciting news! Polaris celebrates its 10th anniversary as a WONCA Young Doctors Movement chapter on the same day as World Family Doctor Day (WFDD). This year's WFDD theme, "Healthy Planet, Healthy People," couldn't be more fitting for our milestone.

We marked the occasion with an enlightening webinar on Sunday, June 30th, 2024, where we delved into crucial issues like climate change, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, and the healing power of nature. If you missed it, don't worry—you can catch the recording on our website and Facebook page.

Our inspiring guest speakers shed light on the challenges and innovative solutions in planetary health and Family Medicine. Their insights remind us that tackling these environmental and healthcare issues requires creativity, perseverance, and a commitment to sustainable practices.

In this special edition of the Polaris Post, we focus on how we can integrate the principles of planetary health into our Family Medicine practice. Let's honor nature and work together towards a healthier planet and healthier people. Enjoy the read!

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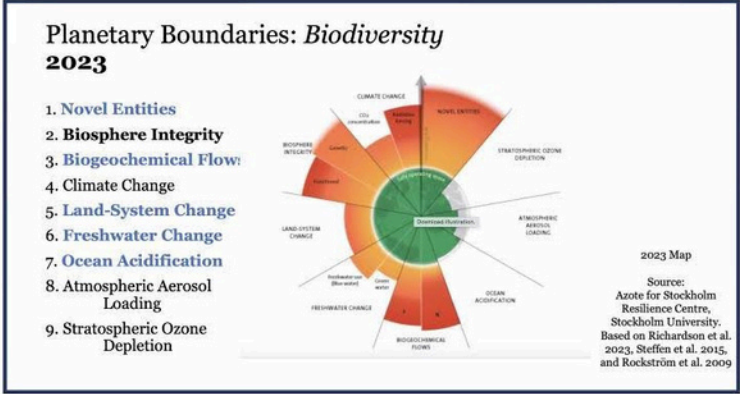
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# Healthy Planet, Healthy People



**Simple, Powerful Therapy**

- **NUTRITION:** Choose predominantly whole, plant-based foods that are fiber-filled, nutrient dense, health-promoting and disease-fighting
- **SLEEP:** Lack of, or poor-quality sleep can lead to a strained immune system. Identify and alter environmental habits that may hinder healthy sleep
- **EXERCISE:** Regular and consistent physical activity is an essential piece of an optimal health equation
- **SUBSTANCE USE:** The well-documented dangers of any addictive substance use can increase risk for many cancers and heart disease
- **STRESS MANAGEMENT:** Identify both positive and negative stress responses with coping mechanisms and reduction techniques for improved wellbeing
- **SOCIAL CONNECTION:** Being connected to others is essential to emotional resiliency and overall health



**Planetary Boundaries: Biodiversity 2023**

1. Novel Entities
2. Biosphere Integrity
3. Biogeochemical Flow
4. Climate Change
5. Land-System Change
6. Freshwater Change
7. Ocean Acidification
8. Atmospheric Aerosol Loading
9. Stratospheric Ozone Depletion

2023 Map  
Source: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University. Based on Richardson et al. 2023, Steffen et al. 2015, and Rockström et al. 2009

## Polaris 10th Year Anniversary & WFDD 2024 Webinar

[Click Here to Watch](#)

### Our Presenters:

Liz Willetts

Dr. Melissa Sundermann

Dr. Caleb Dresser

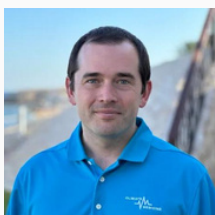
Dr. Melissa Lem



Liz Willetts,  
MEM, MMSc



Melissa Sundermann,  
DO, DipABLM,  
FACLM



Caleb Dresser,  
MD, MPH

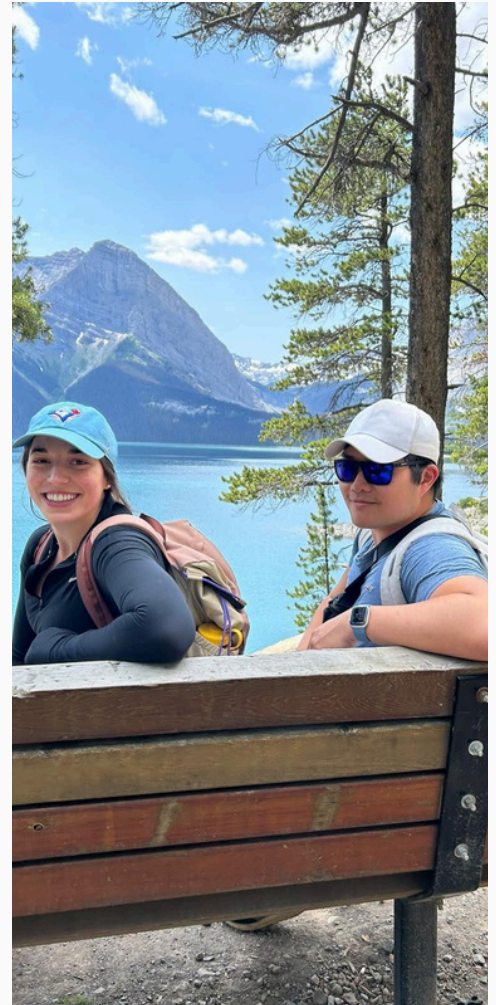


Melissa Lem ,  
MD, CCFP,  
FCFP





## Polaris Celebrating WFDD 2024







## Polaris Celebrating WFDD 2024



WFDD 2024

Healthy  
Planet,  
Healthy  
People





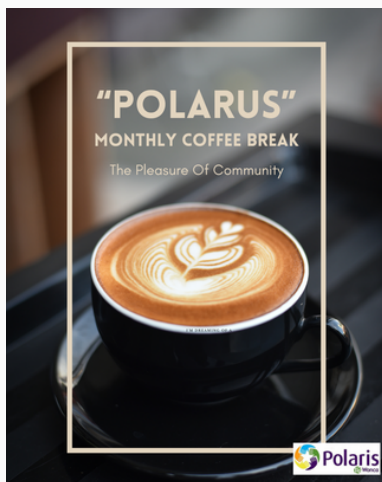


## Our Polaris Projects Updates







PolaRISE Mentorship Program - Congratulations to the first PolaRISE cohort, featuring participants from around the globe! As we enter the final month, we reflect on the unique and dynamic mentorship experience enriched with monthly sessions focused on physician leadership development. Your journey has been inspiring, and we look forward to celebrating your achievements.



PolarUS - PolarUS goes quarterly! Our hybrid general membership meeting and coffee break aim to strengthen community belonging while providing insightful talks on matters in Family Medicine. Don't miss out! See the upcoming events on page 16 for more details.



## Click & Join Our Community

-  [woncapolaris](#)
-  [Whatsapp](#)
-  [Facebook](#)
-  [Polaris website](#)
-  [empowerED Podcast](#)
-  [empowerED Podcast](#)

WONCA  
Polaris  
2024:  
“Shining  
Brighter”





## Our Polaris Projects Updates (continued)

empowerED - We have been dedicated to bringing you monthly episodes of WONCA Polaris' first podcast, empowerED! Be sure to check out our past three interviews by clicking on the hyperlinks below. Don't forget to subscribe to the show on Spotify or Apple Podcasts to stay updated with new episodes. We'd love to hear your thoughts on the show! Send us an email or leave us a review at [woncapolaris@gmail.com](mailto:woncapolaris@gmail.com)

### April

Rural Health and Difficult Conversations in Medicine with Dr. Filip Gilic

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

### May

Life-life Balance, The Intentional Yes, and Living Deliberately with Dr. Michael Hersh

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

### June

Learners in Difficulty, Safe Learning Spaces, and Self Grace with Dr. Clayton Dyck

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

WONCA  
Polaris

2024:

“Shining  
Brighter”







## WONCA Polaris Star - Canada

SRISHTI SHRIVASTAV



Dr. Srishti Shrivastav is in her first year as a Family Medicine Resident at the University of Calgary, and she absolutely loves it. Building long-term relationships with her patients and hearing their stories bring her immense joy. Following up with familiar patients and witnessing their progress is one of the highlights of her day. The variety in her work, with each day presenting new challenges and excitement, keeps her engaged and never bored.

Her journey into Family Medicine was inspired by the amazing mentors she had throughout medical school. These Family Physicians showcased the diverse and dynamic nature of the practice, sparking her interest. The flexibility to work in both urban and rural settings excites her, as it offers the opportunity to give back to the communities she grew up in. Their unwavering support, combined with her own passion for Family Medicine, led her to this path.

If you were to write a book about yourself, what would you name it?

“Alive, Surviving and ... Thriving”

SRISHTI SHRIVASTAV

### How do you motivate yourself at work?

*“At work, I feel I am motivated by those around me. I feel privileged to be a part of patient care, so my patients inspire me to learn and delve deeper into providing patient-centered care. I constantly learn new things from my patients at work. In addition, meeting with my mentors also motivates me. They challenge me when I feel I am getting too comfortable and support me when I am struggling. Lastly, I think my family also inspires me; just thinking about them and the values they have instilled in me, such as hard work, resilience, and compassion for others, keeps me motivated!”*

Since starting medical school, Srishti has been actively involved with the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), first as a medical student representative and now as a resident representative. She spearheaded the first-ever virtual Family Medicine Interest Group week, receiving positive feedback and the Medical Student Leadership Award for her efforts and passion. Now, as Chief Resident, she is excited to continue advocating for Family Medicine and shaping its future. Outside of medicine, Srishti is known as the chocolate cake connoisseur. Living in Calgary, she takes full advantage of the proximity to the Rocky Mountains, organizing hikes with her co-residents. She also enjoys Bollywood dancing, cooking various vegetarian dishes, and has recently developed an interest in meditation.





## WONCA Polaris Star -USA

LUDNY CHARLES

Dr. Ludny Charles is a PGY-3 Family Medicine Resident at Yuma Regional Medical Center in Yuma, AZ. With 2.5 years of training, she is set to graduate on 22 June 2024. She thrives on building solid relationships with her patients and passionately educating them about healthy eating and lifestyle changes.

Her journey in Family Medicine was profoundly influenced by her mentor, Dr. Kathyann Duncan, a Family Physician in New Jersey, whom she shadowed during a medical school break. This experience opened her eyes to the vast scope of the specialty, including chronic disease management, preventative care, and procedural skills. In 2020, she joined Dr. Duncan on her first medical mission trip to Ghana, which deepened her passion for Family Medicine and inspired her to pursue similar work.



### Which accomplishments are you most proud of?

*“My recent successes are mostly around my training during residency, which include becoming Chief Resident, traveling to Peru for a Medical Spanish elective, becoming an AAFP Health Policy Scholar, and becoming Board Certified in Family Medicine.”*

Ludny stays motivated by cultivating a positive attitude, maintaining a healthy work-life balance, and keeping up with the latest medical advancements to ensure her patients receive the best care possible. A huge baseball fan, she adores the New York Yankees and grew up listening to John Sterling’s radio broadcasts. One of her dreams is to attend a live game at every stadium in the US.

Outside of medicine, Ludny loves to travel the world, experiment with cooking various cuisines, spend quality time with family and friends, and enjoy live music concerts.

If you were to write a book about yourself, what would you name it?

“The Road Less Traveled”

LUDNY CHARLES





## WONCA Polaris -The Caribbean

NAJUMA COMISSIONG

Dr. Najuma Comissioning is a dedicated Family Physician with nearly a year of experience at Diagnostic Medical Inc., a Family Medicine group practice in Barbados. Her days are brightened by delivering good news to patients, mainly when their hard work has improved a modifiable health-related risk factor they had previously discussed.

During her internship, Najuma's journey into Family Medicine was shaped when she felt distressed by the tertiary level's "patching up" approach to patient care. This experience motivated her to pursue comprehensive, evidence-based primary care. Her determination and hard work paid off when she won the research prize for her Family Medicine DM year group despite doubting her ability to complete a high-quality project on time. Najuma also earned distinctions in her MBBS and postgraduate Family Medicine Diploma programs, showcasing her commitment to excellence in the field.

### How do you stay motivated at work?

*"The reality is that trying to balance patients' emotions, needs, and wants with your agenda can be a heavy task, especially when the case is multilayered or undifferentiated or if the patient is carrying the frustration of prior dissatisfactory visits with other clinicians. When I try to place myself in the patients' shoes within the consultation and refer to the golden rule (do unto others as you should have them do unto you), I can carry on with more vigor to give my best."*

Beyond medicine, Najuma finds fulfillment in seeing her toddler mirror the empathetic gestures and phrases she has taught him, feeling that the world is a bit better because of his kindness. She has spent as much time as a backup singer and violinist in the reggae-fusion band Kalead & Kayaweh as she has in medicine. Although the band took a hiatus after closing a music festival just before the first COVID-19 lockdown, she continues to perform at smaller events, and new music is on the horizon.

Najuma's diverse interests extend to her past as a national junior middle-distance runner and her ongoing enthusiasm for jogging. An avid track and field fan, she was partly influenced to study at UWI Mona by knowing Usain Bolt trained at the Mona Bowl. Additionally, Najuma is an amateur painter and songwriter, showcasing her creative talents alongside her medical career.

If you were to write a book about yourself, what would you name it?

"There is Always a Song"

NAJUMA COMISSIONG



# Polaris Leadership Buzz - Young Family Doctors Championing Planetary Health



As young Family Doctors and medical students, you're in a unique position to drive a transformative movement that links our planet's health to our patients' health. By embracing sustainable practices and advocating for environmental stewardship, you can lead toward a healthier future for all. Here are some impactful ways to champion planetary health in your medical practice and community.

## Educate Patients on Environmental Health

Go digital to reduce paper waste, reduce single-use plastics, and ensure proper medical waste disposal. Upgrading energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling systems can significantly lower your clinic's carbon footprint.

## Promote Sustainable Diets

Highlight the health and environmental benefits of plant-based diets. Offer patients resources and recipes to support their transition to more sustainable eating habits, which can positively impact both their health and the planet.

## Prescribe Nature

Encourage patients to spend time outdoors with nature prescriptions. Partner with local parks to provide information on accessible natural spaces, emphasizing the mental and physical health benefits of being in nature.





## Lead by Example

Show your commitment to sustainability in your personal life and share your experiences with colleagues and patients. Initiate clinic-wide sustainability projects, like recycling programs or energy audits, to inspire and engage your team.

## Community Education and Outreach

Host workshops and seminars on planetary health topics like climate change, pollution, and sustainable living. Write articles for local newspapers or community newsletters to raise awareness about the importance of planetary health.

## Sustainable Community Projects

Start or support projects like tree planting events, clean-up drives, or the creation of bike lanes. These activities promote environmental stewardship and encourage sustainable transportation options.

## Continuing Education

Pursue additional training in environmental health and sustainability. Attend conferences and workshops to stay updated on the latest research and innovations in planetary health.



## Research and Innovation

**Research and Innovation:**  
Conduct or support research on environmental impacts on health and effective interventions. Innovate new practices and technologies that promote sustainability in healthcare.

## Global Health Engagement

Join global health initiatives addressing environmental health issues in underserved regions. Collaborate with international organizations to share knowledge and resources, broadening the impact of your efforts.



By incorporating these strategies into your professional and personal life, you can significantly impact planetary health. Your leadership not only improves patient outcomes but also contributes to the sustainability of our planet, ensuring a healthier future for generations to come. Embrace your role as a champion for planetary health and inspire others to join you on this vital journey.





## Polaris Wellness - Personal Nature Prescriptions

As you navigate the demanding healthcare landscape, prioritizing personal wellness as a medical student, Family Medicine resident and early career Family Physician is essential. One of the most influential and holistic approaches is reconnecting with nature. Spending time in natural environments offers numerous physical, mental, and emotional benefits that can enhance your well-being and that of our patients. Polaris invites you to look for ways to incorporate nature regularly in your wellness prescription. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

### Daily Nature Breaks

Schedule and take short nature breaks every day. Even a 10-minute walk in a nearby park during lunch breaks can refresh and rejuvenate you.



### Weekend Getaways

Plan regular weekend trips to natural settings. Whether it's a camping trip, a beach visit, or a mountain hike, these getaways provide a deeper immersion in nature and a break from the daily grind.





## Outdoor Exercise

Choose outdoor venues for your exercise routines. Running or cycling on nature trails, practicing yoga in the park, or swimming in natural bodies of water can make physical activity more enjoyable and beneficial.



## Gardening

Start a garden, even if it's just a small one on your balcony or backyard. Gardening is a therapeutic activity that allows you to connect with nature and enjoy the fruits of your labor.

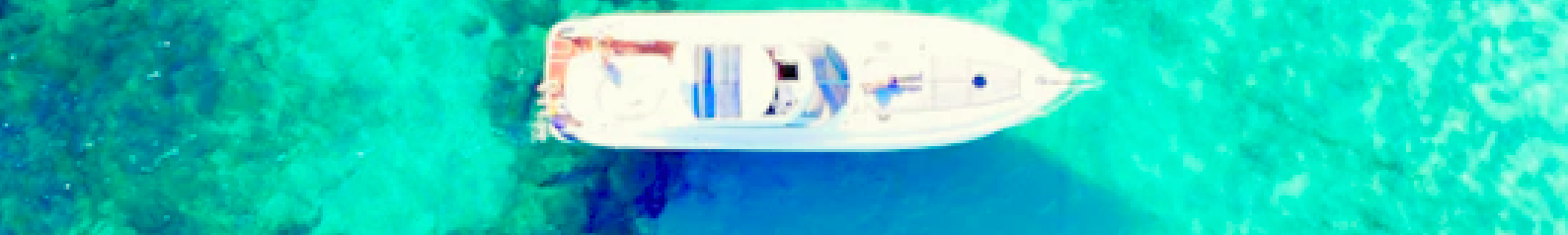
## Nature-based Mindfulness

Engage in mindfulness practices such as gratitude, sitting and focusing on your breath, or saying positive affirmations in natural settings. Combining mindfulness and nature can enhance your sense of peace, joy, and satisfaction.



Whether you try one or a few, we encourage you to write your nature prescription right now (and be compliant). Embrace the healing power of nature and make it an integral part of your wellness journey.





Help us to  
unleash the  
power of our  
Polaris  
community!

Let us know how you  
would like to get involved:  
newsletter, social media,  
website, blog, project  
support, event  
organization, artist & more

## Happy World Family Doctor Day 2024!



## Polaris Physician Stars

Do you know a medical student with strong interest in Family Medicine, Family Medicine Resident or early career Family Physician in our region who is making a splash in the Family Medicine community? Send us an email with their name, country, and contact so that we can feature them in our Polaris Post Fall Issue. We value your efforts and are dedicated to letting our community know that you are a Polaris Star!



**CALL FOR REGIONAL  
NOMINATIONS**  
Canada, USA, The Caribbean

**Fall 2024 Newsletter  
Physician Spotlight**

**Nomination Deadline**  
15th August 2024 12 o'clock 11:59pm EST

**woncapolaris@gmail.com**



## Announcements, Upcoming Events, Updates

**15th July 2024** empowerED Podcast  
monthly update  
(Spotify and Apple Podcasts)

**25th July 2024** PolarUS Coffee Break  
*Integrating AI in Family  
Medicine* 7:00pm ET  
see Meeting ID below

**28th July 2024** YDM Spice Route & SIG on  
Integrative Medicine  
Webinar 13:00-14:30 UTC

*Zoom Meeting details on WONCA YDM page and YDM Global  
WhatsApp Chat*

**24-25th Sept 2024** EYFDM Pre-conference  
WONCA Europe,  
Dublin, Ireland

For more details Click --> [WONCAEurope2024](https://www.woncaeurope2024.com)

**31st October 2024** PolarUS Coffee Break

PolarUS Meetings Zoom Details for above dates:

Meeting ID: 841 7515 4042

Passcode: 637812

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