

2025 CNSS Lifetime Achievement Award (Charles Drake Medal)



Dr. J. Max Findlay, 2025 recipient



After graduating from medical school at the University of British Columbia in 1982, I interned at St. Michael's hospital in Toronto and then trained in neurosurgery at the University of Toronto, which, courtesy of Professor Hudson, included a very memorable rotation in South Africa. Starting out in Toronto's Gallie Surgery Program I had little experience (in fact none) in neurosurgery, but I quickly became enamored with the intellectual, physical and technical challenges of the specialty, along with the many colorful and wonderful surgeon teachers in the division. I would later write about these neurosurgical heroes in historical papers, tributes and memorials.

Gravitating towards the excitement of aneurysm surgery and with the expectation that residents pursue research, I applied to Dr. Bryce Weir's experimental surgery laboratory at the University of Alberta in Edmonton with a novel idea about

the prevention of post subarachnoid hemorrhage cerebral vasospasm. I eventually obtained a PhD in Experimental Surgery at the U of A in 1999, a very rewarding time spent in the lab.

My intent was to get back to Toronto, but I was offered a general neurosurgical practice in Edmonton, with a clinical and scientific focus on cerebrovascular neurosurgery, especially carotid artery surgery and cerebral aneurysms. My partner at the time, and now wife Sheila (who I had suggested stay home in Toronto for my "one year" on the prairie, but she came along anyways) had decided Edmonton was becoming home, with an appealing proximity to the Rocky Mountains. Bryce was interested in me bringing carotid surgery to his division, along with cervical and lumbar microdissectomies, at that time new to Alberta, and helping him out on the aneurysm and microvascular decompression operations.

I went to work, clinically and academically, and have published to date 88 peer reviewed papers, 36 invited papers and chapters, including chapters on cerebral vasospasm in two editions (including the most recent) of *Youmans and Winn Neurological Surgery*. I have served on the editorial board of both neuroscience and neurosurgical journals, including *Neurosurgery*, *Stroke*, and the *Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences*, the latter as an associate editor.

I have been truly honored to be an invited speaker and visiting professor across our country and around the world.

I have held a number of both local and national leadership positions, including president of the Canadian Neurosurgical Society, president of the Canadian Neurological Sciences Federation, and I have been a long-time member of the Royal College Examinations Board, including almost ten years as Chief Examiner. I was the creator of the "Canadian National Practice Exam" for neurosurgery and administered it annually for training programs across the country since 2005.

At home I have been a neurosurgery program and divisional director, and more recently a site chief at the University Hospital in Edmonton, positions thankfully taken over by younger and far more competent people long ago.

It is a very great honour to be even considered for this lifetime achievement award from my society and my peers, much less receive it.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my neurosurgical colleagues, past and present, who have made this award possible.



The Canadian Neurosurgical Society

Société canadienne de neurochirurgie

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