

2022 CNSS Lifetime Achievement Award – Charles Drake Medal recipient

Dr. Mary Elizabeth “Betty” MacRae



The CNSS is very pleased to present the 2022 CNSS Lifetime Achievement Award – Charles Drake Medal to Betty MacRae.

This award was conceived in 2013 as a memorable enhancement to the luminary Award of the Canadian Neurosurgical Society for Lifetime Achievement. This year's recipient joins a stellar group of prior awardees including Dr. R.O. Holness (2016), Dr. M.C. Wallace (2017) and Dr. Falah B. Maroun (2018) and Dr. Andre Olivier (2019)

Graduating from the University of Toronto medical school in 1968, Dr. Elizabeth “Betty” MacRae entered into the neurology residency program in Toronto and near the end of training, “caught the neurosurgery bug.” After successfully passing the Royal College neurology exams in 1977, she then immediately entered into the Toronto neurosurgery residency program, despite reservations based on her gender. She successfully completed surgical training and received her Royal College credentials in neurosurgery in 1982 and was one of its earliest female successful Fellows.

Betty was then recruited to begin her neurosurgical career in Calgary and has worked tirelessly as an exemplary surgeon with a focus in skull base neurosurgery. A strong mentor and role model to many, especially to the women under-represented in our specialty, Betty has been a devoted member of the Division of Neurosurgery in the Department of Clinical Neurosciences at the University of Calgary. To the best of our knowledge, Betty was the first woman to complete neurosurgical residency in Canada, pass the Royal College exams, and establish a successful neurosurgical practice in our country.

Dr. MacRae has overcome gender bias and numerous obstacles in her long career to provide almost three decades of exemplary and compassionate neurosurgical care to Canadians. Holder of three specialist certificates from the Royal College in Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Sports Medicine, she is regarded as a highly skilled skull base neurosurgeon and dedicated physician, both locally and nationally. She has set a standard of excellence to which we all strive and will always be, in our opinion, “Canada’s First Woman of Neurosurgery.” Betty is now enjoying a well deserved retirement and as an octogenarian, is still challenging the ski slopes of Banff.

The consummate clinician, Dr. MacRae is a well-deserved recipient of the 2022 CNSS Lifetime Achievement Award – Charles Drake Medal.