

2026 CNSS Lifetime Achievement Award (Charles Drake Medal)

Dr. Michael West, 2026 recipient



Born in England, Dr. Michael West moved to Winnipeg as a child. He attended medical school at the University of Manitoba, where he also completed his neurosurgery residency training under the supervision of Dwight Parkinson, who encouraged him to pursue a Ph.D. and invited his collaboration on important publications. During his residency training they wrote a paper on “Traumatic intracranial aneurysms” published in the *Journal of Neurosurgery* in 1980 and later a chapter on “Lesions of the cavernous plexus region” for *Youmans Neurological Surgery, Third Edition*. Dr. Parkinson consistently encouraged Dr. West to be curious and to contribute to the Neurosurgical literature. He earned a Ph.D. from Dr. Henry Friesen’s Physiology Department under the supervision of Dr. Viktor Havlicek. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1979. Dr. West was awarded a McLaughlin Travelling Fellowship in 1980, training with three neurosurgical masters: pituitary and skull base neurosurgery under Charles Wilson at UCSF, pediatric neurosurgery under Anthony Raimondi at Northwestern University in Chicago, and cerebrovascular surgery under Charles Drake at the University of Western Ontario. This experience advanced the skills learned in Dr. Parkinson’s neurosurgical training program.

Dr. West returned to Winnipeg in 1981 with an appointment in the Section of Neurosurgery. He rapidly became a sought-after clinician, teacher and surgeon in Manitoba, winning multiple teaching awards and achieving the rank of Associate Professor. He introduced the procedure of computer-guided stereotactic biopsy to the management of neurosurgery patients in 1985 and demonstrated the technique to Dr. Mark G. Torchia, Ph.D., a brilliant researcher sponsored by the Department of Surgery, working on robotic control projects. Dr. West and Dr. Torchia proposed the development of a robotic controlled laser system for computer-guided stereotactic brain tumour resection and secured seed funding for the project. Dr. Torchia went on to develop Laser Interstitial Thermoablation, a major contribution to the management of intracranial tumours and certain epileptogenic lesions.

Dr. West collaborated with Dr. Mirek Stranc, Head of Plastic Surgery at the University of Manitoba, to develop a combined Craniofacial Surgery Service for treatment of craniofacial abnormalities in children and adults. The first patient was an infant with severe hypertelorism who was operated on in 1979. From that time until 1994, the range of conditions treated included the correction of many other congenital defects, trauma, malignancy and some metabolic disorders.

In 1994 Dr. West moved to Cleveland, Ohio where his neurosurgical practice included collaboration with renowned Cleveland Clinic neuroradiologists Thomas Masaryk and Michael Modic, pioneers in the inception of novel neurointerventional techniques for the treatment of intracranial vascular pathology. New patients were afforded the most advanced neurosurgical and endovascular options; assessed to determine the safest and most effective treatment for each individual and managed accordingly. Outcomes were clearly improved by this approach and this experience influenced Dr. West when he incorporated neurointerventional specialty input into a team approach to the management of cerebrovascular pathology upon his subsequent recruitment back to Winnipeg.

He returned to Manitoba in 2000 as Professor and Head of the Section of Neurosurgery at the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre and the University of Manitoba. He quickly embarked on a rapid expansion and modernization of neurosurgery, initially recruiting subspecialty neurosurgeons to develop and lead programs in Vascular, Spine, Cranial nerve, Functional, and Pediatric neurosurgery (the first Pediatric Neurosurgeon to practice in Manitoba). During his tenure as Head, the section expanded from four to ten Neurosurgeons, offering the full range of neurosurgical care to the people of Manitoba, Nunavut, and Northwestern Ontario.

Dr. West became one of the pioneers of stereotactic radiosurgery in Canada with the opening of

Canada’s first Gamma Knife program, treating the first patient in November 2003. **Dr. Anthony Kaufmann, a longtime colleague and friend, was a key collaborator in the development of this important program, along with his other major contributions to the evolution of neurosurgery in Winnipeg.** Patients were referred from across the country. To date, the program has treated over 5,000 patients. Following the success of the Gamma Knife, he developed an interest in Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT) and initiated with CancerCare Manitoba the development of a SBRT program to treat extracranial tumours.

Dr. West collaborated with Dr. Paul Kerr and his colleagues in Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery to establish a combined approach using CT-guided endoscopic endonasal techniques to treat pathologies of the skull base, particularly pituitary tumours, but also including orbital, nasal and brain tumours.

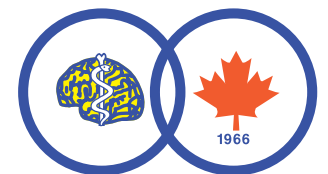
Dr. West continued to pursue a role in the education of students, residents and fellow neurosurgeons. His commitment to teaching and education was recognized by his receipt of the Canadian Association of Medical Education Certificate of Merit in 2018. While continuing full-time practice as a neurosurgeon he held significant roles in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Manitoba, serving as Associate Dean of Postgraduate Medical Education from 2010 to 2016 and Associate Dean of Professionalism from 2016 to 2019. He strongly supported the Royal College, serving on several On-Site Surveys of Residency Programs and

Affiliated Education Sites as well as various committees, including the Neurosurgery Specialty Committee (2001- 2008), Neurosurgery Examination Committee and the PGME Accreditation Committee. He secured funding to add a Clinician Investigator Program to the list of University of Manitoba Specialty programs.

Despite busy clinical, administrative and educational roles he published over 130 peer-reviewed manuscripts and abstracts, and has given over 50 invited talks. He contributed to important multicenter studies of stroke prevention and cerebral aneurysm management.

Dr. West has been recognized for his contributions to the care of Manitobans and Canadians; he received the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012, the Doctors Manitoba Distinguished Service Award in 2014, the Order of Manitoba in 2019 and the Order of Canada (CM) in 2022. He was conferred with the title Professor Emeritus at the University of Manitoba in 2022.

For his significant contributions to Canadian neurosurgery, CNSS bestows the 2026 CNSS Lifetime Achievement Award on Dr. Michael West.



**The Canadian Neurosurgical Society
Société canadienne de neurochirurgie**

Previous award recipients can be seen here: cnsf.org/cnss/about-cnss/lifetime-achievement-award