



# Beyond the Mask



Dr. Ashraf Fayad

Dr. Ashraf Fayad, the Academic Chair of the 2019 Ontario Anesthesia Meeting, is a cardiovascular anesthesiologist and a certified peri-operative echocardiographer based at London Health Sciences Centre, University Hospital. He is a Site Chief for the Department of Anesthesiology and Peri-Operative Medicine, an associate professor and the lead and director of the Peri-Operative Echocardiography/Ultrasound Program at Western's Department of Anesthesiology and Peri-Operative Medicine. Dr. Fayad sat down recently with Dr. Jane Cooke-Lauder, the Section's strategic consultant, and Lindsay Kneteman, the Section's communications and administrative coordinator, to share thoughts on leadership.

Valuing personal growth and development, listening to feedback, seeing emerging themes early and taking action: these are some of the leadership qualities that define Ashraf and what he is bringing to the role of Academic Chair of the 2019 OAM. As the son of two teachers, Ashraf's deep respect for education was founded at a young age. "I'm really honoured to serve as the academic chair," said Ashraf, "And am committed to delivering an end product that meets delegates' expectations." Having reviewed past conference feedback to understand what delegates enjoyed and where more is wanted and using his extensive experience and connections—he's a veteran member of the CAS Scientific Committee as well as a former chair of Ottawa's Winterlude Anesthesia Symposium—he's put together a list of well-known speakers addressing "the hot topics that every anesthesiology wants to hear about." In addition, he's particularly excited about the six different problem-based learning seminars that will provide delegates, most importantly, with the chance to apply new knowledge.

One of the trends that Ashraf spotted early in his career was the opportunity presented by echocardiography to help high risk patients. He took on the role of Lead and Director at the then newly created Perioperative Echocardiography Service and Program (POCUS) at The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) in 2004, when this sub-specialty was still emerging. Ashraf recalled how some of his colleagues questioned whether this unproven program was a misdirection of resources. With the backing and guidance of then-department chair, Dr. Homer Yang, the program survived and in 2006, Ashraf established the Perioperative Hemodynamic Echocardiography (PHE) fellowship at TOH, the first such fellowship in Canada. "It's rewarding to look back and see how many patients have benefited from this program and how many physicians have been trained through the fellowships. Now echocardiography is an integral part of our practice." Not surprisingly, Ashraf considers his work with TOH's peri-operative echocardiography program as his biggest contribution to the field of anesthesiology.

The drive to action and stepping up to responsibility in some ways led to Ashraf's choice of both specialty and sub-specialty. A short rotation with an anesthesiology resident and he was committed: "I realized that the anesthesiologists were really the ones running the show," given their extensive knowledge, about surgical procedures, the medical condition of the patient and the general peri-operative environment. Besides being intrigued by the fast pace of the operating room, Ashraf also enjoyed the immediateness of anesthesiology, "Within in a few minutes, you bring that patient to life. I like that, I like to see the changes in the patient." He recalled how during his fellowship, he would eagerly rush to attend cardiac calls, regardless of the time of day they occurred, in order to see and learn as much as possible. "I always loved cardiac physiology and the challenges of cardiac surgery cases. I like making decisions in a short space of time."

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**He recalled growing up and hearing about the healthcare challenges that the Middle East faced, "My parents would talk about how there was a lack of qualified physicians to save lives."**  
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This drive to action is tempered by the recognition of the importance of not jumping to conclusions, especially when leading a cross-cultural team. Living, studying and working in a number of different regions including the Middle East, Europe and North America, as well as a number of different institutions, has led Ashraf to respect how important understanding the context and the culture is: "Leaders should take their time to understand the problem well."

Two stints in leadership roles at Abu Dhabi's then Zayed Hospital, where he was responsible for developing and then implementing policies and creating a reliable system for the open-heart program, was both wonderful and challenging. This was due, in part, to the varied backgrounds of his colleagues. Exploration of mixed patient outcomes in the intensive care unit made him aware of not judging the individual caregivers too quickly and the importance of assessing the situation from all sides.

"In the United Arab Emirates, they recruit from all over the world," explained Ashraf, "You have people from different cultures and different skills working in one department that now need to deliver one standard of care." Definitions and understanding of standards of care varied greatly. Believing in the ability of his fellow physicians and their commitment to patient care and safety, and based on the data he had collected, Ashraf's approach was to talk directly to them as a group, presenting the facts in a non-emotional way, pointing out the patient outcome and providing them with the tools to make the changes going forward. One approach he found particularly effective was to involve the physicians who were struggling in specific areas by having them gather, analyse and present the relevant data. "Engaging them was the best thing I did. They took ownership of resolving the issue," recalled Ashraf.



This approach of influencing others is also very characteristic of Ashraf's leadership style. He believes that one of the hallmarks of a good leader is being able to lead by example, something he strives to do, whether in a clinical or academic environment. "You want to influence others towards positive outcomes."

This goes hand-in-hand with another trait that he believes all good leaders must have: effective communication skills. He explained that it's vital for a leader to not only be able to give clear, concise directions but also to truly listen, in order to properly understand a problem. "It is difficult to be a good listener and leader without self-awareness," said Ashraf, adding that we all need to recognize our strengths and weaknesses. From there, a good leader can then assemble the right team. Ultimately, "the team is key to leadership." This belief in teamwork is not just lip service. While discussing his new role with the OAM, Ashraf noted without prompting how organizing the meeting isn't a one-man show, "It's a team effort to come up with a great end product."

Doing all these things well requires training. To Ashraf, while yes, leadership is in part an innate quality, it also has to be taught and learned. His passion for leadership was sparked while at TOH, where he discovered how much he enjoyed the responsibilities and challenges that came with his leadership role at POCUS. Following his first stint in the United Arab Emirates, Ashraf acquired an Executive Leadership Diploma at Cornell University, complemented a few years later by Cornell's Executive Leadership for Healthcare Professional Diploma. Besides fulfilling his own personal love of learning, enrolling in these two programs also speaks to Ashraf's strong belief in physician leadership. "To ensure patient safety and the best possible patient outcome, I believe physicians should be in leadership positions," Ashraf said, "Leadership comes with both authority and responsibility. Acquiring the necessary training and experience is crucial."

*This year's OAM runs from Thursday, September 26 until Sunday, September 29 at Toronto's Westin Harbour Castle Conference Centre. For more details, keep reading and to register, [please click here](#).*

## There's Still Time to Register for the Ontario Anesthesia Meeting

Have you registered yet for one of Canada's largest anesthesia-focused conferences? The 64<sup>th</sup> OAM promises three days of high-quality content from skilled and experienced speakers from across the province. Learn about the latest developments in peri-operative management and pain control, cardiovascular/thoracic anesthesia, pediatric/obstetric anesthesia and more. The OAM is also offering a workshop in point-of-care ultrasound and six different problem-based learning sessions. This **Group Learning** program has been reviewed by the College of Family Physicians of Canada and is awaiting final certification by the College's National Chapter. For more details and to register for the conference and its associated events, [click here](#).

### Annual General Meeting

On **Friday, September 27**, join us starting at **2:00pm** for our Annual General Meeting. This always informative event will this year include an important strategic exercise aimed at helping the Section decide its priorities for the five years following 2020 and what should succeed our Beyond the Mask strategic initiative. In order for this exercise to succeed, we need your participation! As part of the agenda, we will be reviewing the results from our recent members' survey (a big "thank you" to everyone who provided input) and demo'ing our new Ontario's Anesthesiologists app.

Also featured will be updates from our Section chair, Dr. Monica Olsen, presentations from our Tariff Chair, Dr. Eric Goldszmidt and Section Treasurer, Dr. Kashif Yousuf and new OMA president Dr. Sohail Gandhi. The AGM will be followed by a reception in the Exhibitors Hall where light refreshments will be served.



### Saturday Night Social Event

This year's Saturday Night Social Event will take place at sophisticated Toronto "speakeasy," [D.W. Alexander](#), located a short distance away from the Westin at 19 Church Street. The night includes a range of delicious hors d'oeuvres, including multiple options for vegetarians. There will also be an open bar that includes access to top shelf brands, beer, wine and our fun and tasty signature drinks (plus plenty of non-alcoholic options as well). And let's not forget the amazing company! Mix and mingle with anesthesiologists from across the province in the comfort of an upscale environment that is completely reserved for our party. The fun starts at **7:30pm** and all conference delegates and their guests are welcome to attend this memorable evening.

**Purchase your tickets when you register!**  
**Already registered and want to attend? [Just let us know!](#)**



### Looking for a Change? Visit Our Employment Opportunities Listings

Centres across Ontario are eagerly recruiting for full-time, part-time and locum positions. Stop by [the Employment Opportunities page](#) and see what's available. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, a 395-funded bed acute care facility delivering all services daily including acting as a Regional Trauma Centre and Cancer Referral Centre for Northwestern Ontario, is particularly eager to recruit support coverage throughout the months of September – December 2019. [Northern Specialist Locum Program](#) remuneration is available.