On behalf of our faculty and staff, we would like to offer our sincerest congratulations to the graduating Southern Medical Program Class of 2017. For each of our students, this momentous occasion culminates years of hard work, endless hours of studying, and many sacrifices for both them and their families. As one chapter closes, the next one begins as they now pursue postgraduate training in their chosen field of practice in BC and across Canada. Not lost on us is how truly privileged we are to be part of their journey through medical school and see them grow both professionally and personally.

The SMP Class of 2017 represents the third graduating cohort from our distributed medical program and brings the total number of new doctors educated and trained in the BC Interior to 90. Here are a few key highlights about our 2017 class:

- A total of 30 new doctors are graduating this year from the SMP.
- 63% matched to family medicine including one with the Kelowna Rural site
- 20% matched with generalist specialties (internal medicine, pediatrics, and psychiatry).
- 57% matched with UBC residency programs to continue their medical training in BC.

We would like to thank our dedicated faculty and staff throughout the BC Interior, Interior Health, UBC Okanagan, and our community partners for their continued support. We must also thank the countless patients in hospitals, community health centres, and family practice clinics for allowing our students into their lives and assisting with their care.

Congratulations once again to our 2017 graduates and newest SMP alumni. We are extremely proud and hope to see them return as faculty in the not-so-distant future.

Dr. Allan Jones,
Regional Associate Dean, Interior and Associate Vice-Provost, Medical Sciences UBC Okanagan
Just four short years ago, we began our medical training in Vancouver. Meeting my classmates on that first day during orientation, I was struck by the immediate cohesion of the SMP group. We quickly formed close friendships that would carry us through the next four years of medical school. Although we came from different backgrounds and institutions, it was easy to find much in common. Many shared a passion for good wine and food (which was not hard to find in the Interior), others were avid rock climbers, runners, talented musicians and artists, but for all of us, a sense of dedication to medicine was shared as we embarked on a journey to become doctors.

That journey has been one of the most incredible experiences imaginable. Four years filled with lecture halls, textbooks, and many hours in the hospital, were balanced by some of my happiest memories shared with the SMP class.

The majority of our class has chosen to pursue careers in primary care including family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics. Some are staying to train in Kelowna and elsewhere in BC, while others are going as far as Nova Scotia. The remainder are pursuing a variety of specialties including anesthesia, orthopaedics, paediatric neurology, psychiatry, and urology. We have all fallen in love with the Interior, and many of us hope to return to practice medicine, join the teaching faculty, and give back to the community.

It is by no mere accident or coincidence that our graduating class has been so successful. It is the product of a nurturing environment created here by SMP faculty & staff, the support of our friends & family, and the communities we worked in. We have been incredibly fortunate to study here in the Interior and we would like to thank all of the physicians and staff for their dedication, mentorship, and commitment to teaching the next generation of doctors. Most importantly, we would like to thank the people of Kelowna, Kamloops, Vernon and Trail who welcomed us into their communities, doctor offices, and hospitals and made our training possible.

In just a few more weeks, we will don our long white coats and enter the hospital for our first time as doctors. We still have a long journey ahead, but I know that the exceptional training at the SMP has prepared us to be the very best physicians we can be. I look forward to following the very bright careers of my classmates and am honoured to be a member of the graduating SMP Class of 2017.

Maksim Parfyonov, President, SMP Class of 2017
SALIMA ABDULLA

My experience at the SMP was incredible. The amazing staff, preceptors, patients and classmates, made the years fly by and I will always remember my time spent in the beautiful city of Kelowna. My future plans include starting the UBC family medicine residency in the Vancouver Fraser Program!

CELINE AKYUREKLI

I feel very lucky to have spent the last four years with such a talented, and genuinely caring group of classmates. Thank you for supporting me to the tops of numerous mountains that I encountered over the last few years. I am grateful for having lived against the backdrop of the beautiful Interior and for all the outdoor adventures that its landscape provided us. Thank you to my classmates who introduced me to so many new activities that I now consider passions. I will fondly remember annual hot spring trips to Nakusp, multiday hikes in the Rockies, learning to rock climb at Skaha and ripping the cliff at Big White, just to name a few. I am very excited to be staying in Kelowna for family medicine residency next year. I look forward to crossing paths with each and every one of you in the future and wish you the best of luck on your next adventures!

BRITTANY COULTHARD

I loved my time here at the SMP and am shocked by how quickly it went by! I am really glad I ended up in Kelowna and it was such a privilege to be a part of the SMP family. We were spoiled with excellent learner-teacher ratios and supportive faculty. And I can not say enough good things about my classmates! It is amazing to watch your friends turn into such talented and caring physicians. It will be difficult to leave this place and so many great memories behind but I am excited to start my next adventure as a family practice resident in Prince George. I plan to do an extra year of residency training in emergency medicine and would love to return to the Okanagan in the future.

MIA FRANCL

What a fantastic 4 years it has been! Thank you so much to my friends and family for their support, and to the SMP staff and faculty for their encouragement and teaching. Being part of the SMP over the past 4 years has been a privilege and I am truly proud to have been a part of this class. I am thankful for the close friendships I have made and I know that my classmates will go on to become incredible physicians. I am very excited to be starting my residency in pediatrics and I’m looking forward to these next few years! Good luck to everyone!

OLIVIA GUERRA

It’s hard to believe that four years have passed since our first days on campus at UBC in Vancouver filled with nervous excitement for the journey ahead - medical school. It seemed daunting, but in a flash of lectures, PBL, anatomy labs and MCQ exams we dove into clerkship, then CaRMS and here we are! There is so much left to learn, but when I think back to how nervous I was interviewing my first patient and fumbling with an otoscope I realize how far I have come. Thank you to my friends and family who were endlessly supportive when I doubted myself and shared in my pride when I conquered a new challenge. Thank you to all of the staff, faculty and SMP students for making this whirlwind journey an incredibly happy chapter of my life. I am so grateful to have been a part of our spirited and adventurous Class of 2017, you will each have a place in my heart and find an open door (and fresh cookies) at my home for you anytime, always.
ALISTAIR HART

Next step: anesthesia at the University of Alberta. My favourite memories during my time at the SMP include the time our bus driver up at Big White reversed into a truck in the parking lot. A hilarious third year clerkship with two good friends, and neuroanatomy micrograph #11- the rostral midbrain. I would like to applaud all the SMP faculty, clinical teachers, volunteer patients, and staff for putting up with me over the four years, and thank them all for making the program feel so welcoming. I believe I received an excellent education from your program, and feel proud to have been a part of it. I wish all my classmates the best in the next steps of their careers, and hope they all have a wonderful summer.

KIRSTEN HICKIE

I have to confess that I initially thought I would have preferred to stay in Vancouver for medical school. As I progressed through the semesters in the SMP, though, it struck me just how lucky I was to be in Kelowna. We are a tight knit community and I made some incredible friends here. In third year, I had opportunities that might not have come about, and I was able to perform many procedures and hone surgical skills. The faculty, preceptors, staff, residents, and friends who have come into my life and have helped to shape the doctor I will become will not be forgotten. Now off I go to Edmonton to train as an orthopaedic surgeon. Huge thanks to my SMP family!

CODY KASKAMIN

I most enjoyed the close camaraderie among the SMP students, cycling with friends to class during years 1 and 2, and the great clinical training I received at RIH. I would like to thank my fellow graduates for their valuable friendships, as well as the student affairs office for their support through the years, and especially James Andrew. I would also like to thank Drs Ismail Laher, Hanh Huynh, Olusegun Oyedele, Allan Jones, John Falconer, Bertal Berg, Gavin Smart, Sarah Brears, Dave Sanden, and Hilary Baikie for their encouragement and mentorship along the way. My time with the SMP has been such an incredible time of personal and professional growth. I am off to Portage la Prairie, MB for a rural family medicine residency program, and then to a career in rural primary care with an Aboriginal health focus. I look forward to the coming residency and am humbled to be entering into such a meaningful and rewarding career.

KEENAN KICIA

After four years in the SMP I am excited to be continuing my training in the rural family medicine program in Medicine Hat, Alberta. I plan to pursue an extra year of training in emergency medicine, with the intention of working in both a GP clinic as well as the emergency department.

GABRIELLE LEVIN

What a crazy four years it’s been. I came from Winnipeg - not knowing anyone and having never driven up a hill (turns out you have to actually press the gas pedal a lot harder), to going skiing at Big White most weekends in the winter and having an extremely supportive, close-knit group of friends. As of July, I will be living in Kingston, as part of Queens’ University Internal Medicine program. I’ll miss the views of the lake and mountains from KGH and all of my SMP family. With some luck, I hope to find myself practicing back in Kelowna (hopefully with some of my fellow SMPers!). Thanks for the best medical school experience!

PAUL MATTSON

I want to sincerely thank all of the faculty and staff at the SMP for your endless support and hard work. Your dedication towards maintaining a positive learning environment is truly exemplary. To my classmates, thank you for a unique and unforgettable four years. Working alongside you in classroom and clinical settings has been inspirational and I wish you all the best as we move on to the next chapter. Looking forward to a family medicine residency across the country at Dalhousie!
LISA NAKAJIMA
Being a part of the SMP was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I’ve enjoyed these past few years greatly and I am lucky I was able to share them with this incredible class. I, of course, couldn’t have survived medical school without judo, the best stress-reliever of all time! I had an unbeatable clerkship experience in Chilliwack, and if I were to do it again, I wouldn’t change a thing. I want to thank the countless great mentors who supported me along the way. I am looking forward to spending my next couple years back in Chilliwack completing my residency in family medicine.

MAKSIM PARFYONOV
Studying medicine at the SMP has been an incredible experience. I have enjoyed living in the Okanagan, meeting some of my closest friends, and learning from exceptional faculty. In particular, I would like to thank my mentors here in Kelowna, Drs. Emily Budd and Dermot Adams, who have not only been wonderful teachers, but also counselled me through this adventure and made it possible for me to succeed in my chosen field. This July, I am very excited to pursue further training at BC Children’s Hospital in pediatric neurology.

DREW PHILLIPS
I want to say a huge thank you to all of the faculty, staff and fellow medical students at the SMP for providing such an amazing environment to learn medicine. I have so many fond memories training in the Okanagan. Some of the highlights included the SMP Golf Tournament, Vernon Docs Hockey Tournament, hearing about all of Maksim’s latest technological innovations, Finn Fridays, and getting together with classmates for dinner/drinks where we could find the time. I’m keen to begin training as a urology resident in Vancouver, and one-day hope to set up practice within this great province. “The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.” (William Osler)

JACQUELINE REID
Thank you to all of the SMP staff and faculty for making medical school such an incredible experience. I will always remember meeting the SMP family at the first lunch, and I am so grateful that the friends I made on that day have continued to eat together over the last four years. I am looking forward to starting residency in internal medicine in Vancouver, and hope to be back in the Okanagan in the future. Good luck to all of my amazing classmates!

LUCY SHEN
I will never forget the wonderful time I’ve spent in Kelowna! The last four years have been transformative. Thank you so much to the dedicated faculty, my fantastic classmates, and the always welcoming Okanagan communities, for the incredible support throughout this journey. I really cannot think of a better place for my medical education! SMP has fostered my knowledge and love of medicine. For all of this, I am immensely grateful. Next up, I am excited to embark on new adventures in the Maritimes as a family medicine resident! Thank you for everything, SMP!!
AARON SOBKOWICZ

It really is amazing how fast the last four years have flown past! It seemed like an endless journey when we began, and now somehow we’re rapidly approaching graduation and residency. To be honest, I really had no idea of what I was getting myself into and there were moments when I questioned my ability to be successful in medicine. But now that we’re near the end and I feel more comfortable in my identity as a future physician (it’ll take a long time getting used to being called “doctor”!) I’m appreciative of the unique experiences I’ve had. I couldn’t have asked for a better program to do my training - all of the faculty and staff were amazing, and we were lucky to have such a great group in Kelowna. I remember during orientation week someone telling us that our future best friends were in that lecture theatre with us, and how true that has turned out to be! I’m excited to continue my training in family medicine in Nanaimo, and definitely plan on settling down with my wife and two sons in either the Okanagan or on Vancouver Island.

CHRISTOPHER STUART

It’s been an amazing 4 years with the SMP. Hard to choose between summer BBQ’s, Big White trips, wine tours or just playing volleyball and soccer outside RHS during lunch and DPAS as a favorite memory. The one thing in common is that they all involved classmates which have since become some of my very best friends. I’ll always cherish terrorizing KGH with “The Boys” in clerkship. For now, off to Halifax for family medicine, then back home to Victoria BC; hopefully practicing alongside some of my classmates. To the staff and faculty: the SMP is a truly special place, and you are what make it so. Through your hard work, vision, and genuine caring you have made a culture that supports learning, fun, and friendship. I will remember each and every one of you with the fondest of memories, thank you!

TOMASZ WALTERS

This chapter in my education is somehow closing, and I have to say, it’s been a blast! In two short months I will be beginning my residency in family medicine. It’s all very surreal! That chatty, wide-eyed medical student is growing up! To my fellow classmates: I feel privileged to have walked this journey alongside you. They were right when they told us med school is where we would make friendships that would last a lifetime - maybe even more than friendships for myself ;) You’re a humble bunch and I can’t wait to see the great things you will do. May the trifecta live on! To the faculty and staff: I am eternally grateful for your inspiration and support. Under your guidance I fell in love with both the science and art of medicine. Compassion, commitment and a curiosity to learn - these are some of the traits I take with me as I leave the nest of my SMP family.

ANGELA WANG

The last four years have been a crazy whirlwind! I still remember being accepted into medical school and thinking “Wow...another four years of school, when is this ever going to end?!” Yet, in the blink of an eye, these years have passed and here we are, ready to embark on our next adventure. (My personal adventure will consist of balancing the demands of a psychiatry residency with the lobster-fishing lifestyle of a Maritimer!) To the faculty and staff who have led us along the way, thank you for your trust and encouragement. To the Class of 2017 (or should I say my fellow “doctors”), we made it! And to my family, friends, and loved ones - thank you for your undying support, for always being there, and for always believing in me. See you on the other coast!

IAN WARBRICK

That was a wild ride and a fun experience thanks to great mentors and friends. Thanks for the good times everyone. I’ll be in Vancouver for the next few years trying my hand at Internal Medicine so if you want to relive the good ol’ days with a climb or lawless volleyball game let me know!
JAMES WILLIAMS

I have enjoyed my time in the SMP thoroughly. I have met many great people and long life friends. Highlights in Kelowna involved climbing and skiing sessions on the weekends and after classes. I will be doing a rural family practice residency through the University of Calgary based out of Lethbridge next year. Part of the residency program will include six months of northern training that I plan on doing in my home town Whitehorse. A message to future students would be to enjoy your time! Work hard, but not too hard.

JENNAFER WILSON

Taking chances is really just about overcoming your fears. I’ve always thought that Dr. J.D. Dorian put it best: “[T]he truth is that every time you take a big risk in your life, no matter how it ends up, you’re always glad you took it.” Medical school has been one wild ride of taking chances and exploring new cities across this country and I couldn’t be happier that I took these chances in St. John, Montréal and Edmonton. Although my time in medical school has many memories of late study nights and way too much caffeine, I know I will always remember the support of my SMP family. I look forward to begin my next challenge in Abbotsford as a R1 in family practice.

VINCENT WONG

Four years have flown by in the blink of an eye. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to have been part of the SMP Class of 2017, where I’ve made meaningful friendships and relationships with classmates, faculty and staff. I will never forget the sense of community I’ve felt through the long nights of studying and call shifts, sharing our joys and tears through this important time in our lives. Thank you to my preceptors and mentors for offering their advice for both my career and my personal life; you’ve made me into a better person and a better physician. Thank you to all for giving me this wonderful experience. It may seem like the end but it’s only the beginning. Looking forward to connect with you all as we begin our professional careers.

ALISHA ZACHARIAS

I can’t believe we’re done! A huge thank you to all the preceptors, mentors and administrative staff for a wonderful four years. From Kelowna to Kamloops, I have been amazed by the quality of teaching and the support I have received. I can’t imagine sharing the last four years with anyone other than the SMP family! Although I’m sad to leave the Okanagan, I’m very excited to start my family practice residency in Victoria, BC. I’m hoping to develop a comprehensive skillset that can be used in underserved communities in Canada as well as abroad. On one last note, I’d like leave you with a quote from a very wise doctor, “You’re off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way!” (Dr. Seuss). All the best to my classmates – I can’t wait to see where the wonderful world of medicine takes you!