

Dr. Garry Wheeler



Brief Abstract and Title:

The MS Community Advisory Council: Advocating for Change

On October 29th and 30th, 2008, the MS Society (Alberta) hosted a gathering of representatives from across Alberta's MS community and the entire spectrum of MS treatment, care and support. Participants included clinicians and health care providers, community support organizations, government officials, and Albertans living with MS.

Their purpose was:

- To understand and learn from nine significant and current initiatives that each had the potential to significantly improve health and quality of life outcomes for Albertans with MS,
- To provide stakeholder feedback, input and advice to these initiatives, and
- To develop a 'big picture' perspective and identify how best to leverage and support current efforts.

There was consensus for the development of an ongoing forum or similar mechanism to support and facilitate communication and synergy among stakeholder groups. As a result the MS Community Advisory Council was formed.

In this session we will explore the development of the Council; the role of the council as an advocate for change, and current advocacy initiatives being undertaken by the council.

Dr. Wheeler is an Exercise Physiologist and Chartered Psychologist. He is currently the Vice President of the Edmonton Chapter and Alberta Division of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada. Dr. Wheeler is also a practicing Registered Psychologist and works with persons with brain injury and stroke in the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in/outpatient brain injury program. Born in England, Dr. Wheeler began his career in the health and fitness industry as a Physical Education Instructor at the King's School in Gloucester, England. He moved to Canada in 1981 to begin a Master's Degree in Physical Education at the University of Alberta, completing in 1984. In 1989 he completed his Doctorate in Physical Education in the area of exercise, training, hormonal responses to exercises, and dietary behaviour of individuals in exercise programs. In 1993, Dr. Wheeler completed a second Masters Degree in Educational Psychology with a specialty in Counselling Psychology. He chartered as a psychologist in the Province of Alberta in 1994.

Formally a member of the International Paralympic Committee and University health fitness and lifestyle instructor for over 20 years, Dr. Wheeler has been an active contributor to the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology and Fitness Accreditation and Certification Association organizations in the development of the Canadian Physical Activity Fitness and Lifestyle appraisal systems for able bodied and persons with disability.

In recognition of services to Albertans and Canadians in the health and lifestyle area, Dr. Wheeler was awarded the Dr. Erwin Bako Award in 2000 and the CSEP/FACA

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National Recognition Award in 2001. In 2007 Dr Wheeler was awarded the International Paralympic Committee Scientific Award for research and services to athletes with disability.

Dr Wheeler's career is now focused in the area of Multiple Sclerosis with a particular focus on health and wellness and the role of exercise in symptom management. He continued to practice as a psychologist at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital where he runs a "Managing Anger and Frustrations Group" and in addition works with caregivers of persons with chronic disease or after trauma/injury including Multiple Sclerosis.