

SSC Summit 2025



Event summary

On Monday, October 6, 2025, the Specialist Services Committee hosted the SSC Summit, as part of the two-day 2025 JCC Conference.

This year's summit was designed to showcase the important work being undertaken by SSC and its partners; provide opportunities for physicians and care partners to collaborate, identify, and share opportunities for system improvement; learn from one another and gain a better understanding of the challenges in specialty care across the province; and finally to socialize the new SSC Strategic Framework 2025–30.

Attendance was the highest on record, with 324 physicians and partners gathering from all corners of the province at Vancouver's Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre.

Physician-led projects funded by the Specialist Services Committee featured in 46 poster boards as well as workshops and rapid-fire presentations. All presentations from the day can be found at collaborateonhealth.ca.



“Networking was the most valuable because I was able to seek out or ... meet people who are working similarly.... I feel much more empowered by the relationships I deepened or forged.” – Survey respondent

Event highlights

Dr Elizabeth Thompson (pictured at right), vice chair of the Specialist Services Committee, emceed the event and invited Indigenous Elder Sam George Jr. (second from top) to welcome attendees to the unceded territory of the Tsleil Waututh peoples with a traditional blessing.

Opening remarks

Opening remarks were provided by SSC Ministry of Health co-chair **Amanda Thompson** (second from bottom), who acknowledged the foundational work of the specialists who have shaped SSC since its inception in 2006. She acknowledged the challenges facing the province, with a growing deficit and ongoing health authority reviews. She noted SSC's critical role in driving shared, collaborative solutions and pointed to successes and opportunities inspired by the work being showcased.

Dr Robert Carruthers (bottom), president of the Consultant Specialists of BC, spoke about the organization's role in helping ensure that British Columbians have timely access to specialist care, even in a resource-constrained environment. Pressures imposed by wait times and the absence of a centralized measurement method are creating challenges, he said, and pointed to opportunities to better manage wait lists for regions in crisis. He highlighted SSC's Consultant Specialist Team Care program as a tool for stabilizing services, as well as opportunities to refresh and expand outreach programs aimed at supporting rural communities.

Keynote speaker

Dr Jillian Horton, a Manitoba-based internal medicine specialist and expert on physician leadership, improvement, and wellness, provided the keynote address, "Thoughts on the Mission."

She spoke of the importance of mindfulness in driving and sustaining both personal and systemic change, referencing John Kotter's eight-step change model, which includes creating the right climate; engaging and enabling others; implementation and sustainment. Her presentation reflected the theme of the JCC Conference: Connect. Collaborate. Elevate.

Connection

Dr Horton spoke about the importance of strategic communication in effecting change and outlined common errors, including overuse of jargon, the "curse" of knowledge, not considering how what you're communicating makes people feel, not accounting for distractions, over-complexity, underuse of repetition, and failure to rehearse.





Collaboration

Dr Horton (left) acknowledged the challenges of working with others and described common strategic collaboration errors, including the following: virtual meetings being seen as a substitute for in-person connection; conversational narcissism; not accounting for the quality of the group's relationship; allowing people who bring the team down to remain; death by consensus; and biases and distortions about the group's work.

“Dr Jillian Horton’s plenary session contained so many practical pearls.... Will be worth watching again.” – Survey respondent

Elevation

Dr Horton talked about the importance of expressing gratitude, which prolongs the half-life of positive emotions. She also emphasized the need to hold onto inspiration, even when it feels impossible. Health care is not a system, she said; it is an ecosystem, made up of living parts that are interdependent. When we know everything is connected, we are better stewards of the whole.

She spoke about the significance of incremental change. In the context of climate change, for example, “one degree” is transformative.

Ultimately, meaning, values, and purpose in our work are the “MVPs” of physician wellness, she said. Medical professionals need to feel mission alignment. We tell ourselves stories about our lives all the time, and we can choose how we frame those stories. Changing a story isn’t accepting the way things are or negating the need for system overhaul. It’s one way to live through these times at the lowest psychological cost so we can build something better.

Breakout sessions

Through three breakout sessions, attendees had the opportunity to hear from speakers and share their knowledge on:

- ▶ Optimize and Equalize: Making Health Care Work for Everyone
- ▶ The Patient Prism: Reflecting Diverse Perspectives on Patient-Centred Care
- ▶ Care from Every Chair: Multiple Approaches, Meaningful Improvements

Table exercise

Participants were asked, “What do you see as the biggest challenge currently facing specialty care that SSC can address?” Out of 176 submitted answers, three themes emerged: access to care and wait lists, physician shortages, and challenges with practice.





Attendees were divided into three groups to brainstorm potential solutions to each challenge and reported on their discussions. Each group identified solutions that were within their sphere of influence and potential solutions they suggested SSC prioritize. The identified opportunities include:

Access to care and waitlists: A province-wide waitlist tracking and management system; patient supports and education to enable proactive, preventative care; clear communication and care pathways; technological solutions that reduce administrative burdens; and an equity-based resource distribution system that considers population needs and disparities in access.

Physician shortages: System supports for new physicians including improvements in credentialing and enhanced onboarding and mentorship; increased focus on training and education to help prevent burnout; increased focus on access, expanding after-hours care, utilizing non-physician staff, supporting rural specialists, incentivizing remote specialist outreach, compensating complexity, and promoting team care.

Challenges with practice: Specialist supports including connecting and collaborating with specialty sections, reopening Enhancing Access cohorts, enhancing leadership pathways, and implementing locum programs in smaller communities.

More detailed results can be found [here](#).

Panel fireside chats

Patient partner **Sandra Ketler** (pictured at far right) hosted two panel discussions, one focused on improving our practice and the other focused on improving our health care system.

The broader discussion featured (pictured from left) **Amanda Thompson** (SSC Co-Chair, MoH), **Dr Julie Chou** (SSC member, DoBC), and **Dr Denise Jaworsky** (SSC member, DoBC).

The practice-focused session featured (below, from left) **Vivian Chan** (SSC member, VCH/PHC), **Kevin Samra** (SSC member, MoH), and **Dr Erica Phelps** (SSC member, DoBC).



Closing remarks

SSC Physician Co-Chair Dr Daisy Dulay offered appreciation for Elder Sam George's traditional welcome, reflecting on how the Musqueam practice of *sq̓ə́dip*—gathering to share teachings by listening, asking questions, learning, and acknowledging what



we don't know—captured the spirit of the day. She said that throughout the 20 years of SSC's existence, innovation has thrived when there are relationships and we work together with purpose.

She reinforced the need for clear communication and recognition of biases in such a complex ecosystem. She thanked participants for sharing their challenges openly while helping change how we think about the constraints in which physicians operate, and thanked the staff, planners, presenters, patient partners, and participants for their part in bringing the day to life. Finally, Dr Dulay (left) looked forward to new opportunities for creativity, in which we can still imagine care differently, with our shared purpose.

SSC Poster Awards

Winners of SSC Poster Awards, voted on by our Patient Partner attendees, included:

EKRH Cancer Diagnosis Optimization

- ▶ Dr Hamid Raziee, East Kootenay Regional Hospital

Preserving the Umbilical Line: Connecting NICU babies to their moms to improve neonatal and maternal outcomes

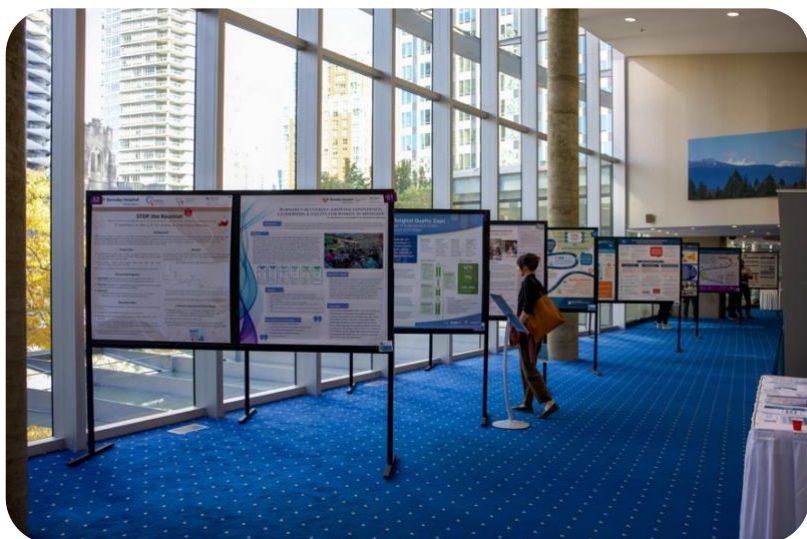
- ▶ Dr Anitha Moodley and Neelam Prasad, Surrey Memorial Hospital

Improving Urgent Access at Patient Medical Home to Reduce Emergency Department Visits

- ▶ Dr Sienna Bourdon, Shoreline Medical Clinic, Brentwood Bay

Adding to Health Care Pollution: Single-Use Plastic Urine Containers

- ▶ Dr Junelle Lee, Foundry Richmond Sexual Health Clinic



Participant feedback

The objectives of the SSC Summit were:

- ▶ Provide opportunities for collaboration, connection, and strengthening of relationships.
- ▶ Identify engaged physician leaders and quality-improvement champions who have agency for system improvement.
- ▶ Inspire action and commitment for improving patient care within the lens of the IHI Quintuple Aim.
- ▶ Seek to understand challenges in specialty care.

Attendees were sent a post-event survey and provided the following feedback and comments.

I am more aware of SSC's work and how it makes a difference (n=115)

92% Agree/strongly agree

7% Neither agree nor disagree

1% Disagree

This event provided opportunities for collaboration, connection, and strengthening relationships (n=115)

93% Agree/strongly agree

6% Neither agree nor disagree

1% Disagree

This event addressed challenges facing specialty care (n=115)

86% Agree/strongly agree

10% Neither agree nor disagree

4% Disagree/strongly disagree

I feel confident I'll be able to use the knowledge gained to address challenges (n=115)

76% Agree/strongly agree

21% Neither agree nor disagree

3% Disagree/strongly disagree

This event inspired me to take action to improve patient care (n=114)

81% Agree/strongly agree

17% Neither agree nor disagree

2% Strongly disagree

This event was a valuable use of my time (n=115)

90% Agree/strongly agree

7% Neither agree nor disagree

3% Disagree/strongly disagree

I would recommend this event to a colleague (n=80)

89% Agree/strongly agree

8% Neither agree nor disagree

4% disagree/strongly

Feedback

Based on survey feedback, the SSC Summit met its objectives in bringing health leaders, physicians, and staff together to connect, identify opportunities for collaboration, and to learn about and celebrate the achievements from the last year.

Many of the participants noted that the keynote address was the highlight of the event and they found it both practical and inspirational. Comments included:

“Dr Horton was the best keynote speaker I have heard, very inspirational and very practical and clear messages.”

The opportunity to connect in person was a highlight for many attendees:

“The ability to network and connect with such a broad range of colleagues from across the province was both inspiring and uplifting.”

The breakout sessions were also appreciated, and some suggested more breakouts would be of value:

“The rapid presentations in the morning were the most valuable—I would have liked more of these.”

Future improvements

In response to the question “How could we improve your experience for next time?” several opportunities were identified:

Content

- ▶ More networking and social time.
- ▶ Shorter sessions with movement breaks built in, along with more diverse topics.
- ▶ Some suggested the panel discussions could have included questions from the audience to spark more robust discussion.
- ▶ Categorize sessions based on topics such as public health care system endeavours, leadership/collaborative roles, specific medical specialties.

Logistics

- ▶ While people generally liked the hotel location, some noted the lack of daylight in the main event rooms.
- ▶ We also received specific suggestions about wayfinding, food, support for presenters, the makeup of panels, and logistical details that we will put into practice with future events, including the following:

“The different rooms for breakout sessions did not seem easy to find. Placards outside with the session name would have been helpful.”

“Wish we had more time during the table discussion, because the group was very curious and interested in learning more about the different topics and related areas from the discussion that we otherwise wouldn't be talking about.”

Thank you to all who were able to attend for a successful and productive SSC Summit. We look forward to seeing you again in the near future.

