

Celebrating 45 Years of Excellence: CRA's Awards of Distinction

For 45 years, the Canadian Rheumatology Association has proudly recognized outstanding members through its **Awards of Distinction**—an honour bestowed upon individuals who have been nominated by their peers for their **remarkable contributions** to the field of rheumatology.

As we approach the **45th anniversary** of the CRA Awards of Distinction in 2026, we take this opportunity to reflect on the many inspiring award winners who have shaped the landscape of rheumatology.

Now, it's your turn to be part of this legacy.

The 2026 awards competition is officially open!

The CRA proudly offers six distinguished awards:

- **NEW!** CRA Leadership Impact Award
- Distinguished Rheumatologist Award
- Distinguished Investigator Award
- Distinguished Teacher-Educator Award
- Early Career Investigator Award
- Early Career Teacher-Educator Award

This year, the CRA is offering a new award! The **CRA Leadership Impact Award** is a mid-career award that recognizes a CRA member who has demonstrated outstanding leadership and advocacy, making a significant impact in the field of rheumatology.

Do you know a colleague whose contributions deserve to be celebrated? Nominate a CRA member for the **2026 Awards of Distinction** and help us recognize excellence in rheumatology. Learn more and submit your nomination at rheum.ca/awards.

Join us in celebrating 45 years of excellence and honouring the educators and innovators who shape the future of rheumatology at the CRA Annual Scientific Meeting in Halifax, April 16-19, 2026!

Honouring Excellence Through the Voices of Past Recipients

What does it mean to be recognized with a CRA Award of Distinction? For many, it represents more than just an accolade—it is a testament to their dedication, contributions, and the deep respect of their peers.

Here's what past award recipients have to say about the impact of receiving this honour:



“During one’s academic life, accomplishments are evaluated by the hospital, the University, by peer review of academic grants and publications each focused on a specific activity. To be recognized by the CRA Award of Distinction by one’s colleagues from across the country is to be recognized for one’s global achievements and is truly a high honour which I cherish until today.”
— Dr. Murray Urowitz, 1995 Distinguished Rheumatologist Award recipient



“It was a great honour to be recognized by the Canadian Rheumatology Association with a Young Investigator Award in 2007. The award reflects the support and mentorship I have had from my colleagues. I have strived to continue contributing to clinical research and advocacy over the years and believe this award has catalyzed my efforts.”
— Dr. Carol Hitchon, 2007 Young Investigator Award recipient



"Receiving the inaugural CRA Distinguished Teacher-Educator Award remains one of the highlights of my career. To be honoured by one's colleagues is uniquely special. The CRA provided the opportunity to work with colleagues across the country to advance postgraduate rheumatology

education. Equally gratifying is that the work which led to the CRA recognition (development of the Canadian Rheumatology Resident Weekend, regional and national annual OSCEs, and the preliminary work on the National Immunology Curriculum) has been continued by those who have followed. It is exciting to see that these initial projects have been adapted and updated over time and continue to be woven into our training programs across Canada. It is such a rewarding sense of contribution to the training of the next generation of rheumatologists."
— Dr. Heather McDonald-Blumer, 2009 Teacher-Educator Award recipient



"This honour means, at least to me, that my peers feel my contributions to our field of rheumatology have been meaningful! This is the highest praise indeed."
— Dr. Gillian Hawker, 2011 Distinguished Investigator Award recipient



"When I received the Distinguished Investigator Award in 2015 at the historic Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City, I was deeply honoured to be recognized by my colleagues and peers, and to have the opportunity to present a summary of my research program to the CRA membership.

I must say, I did feel a bit of the "imposter syndrome", as many do when they are bestowed with such a prestigious honour, particularly when one is aware of the incredible quality of previous (and subsequent) recipients. Every year since, I thoroughly enjoy the presentations of the award recipients and appreciate how they must be feeling in being recognized, as I was. Thank you CRA!"
— Dr. Hani El-Gabalawy, 2015 Distinguished Investigator Award recipient

Be part of this legacy by nominating a colleague for the 2026 CRA Awards of Distinction—submissions are now open at rheum.ca/awards! To learn more, nominate a colleague or view past award recipients, follow this link:

