

BREAKING BARRIERS: INVERMERE PHYSICIAN DR. JOYANNE KRUPA ON GENDER EQUITY & LEADERSHIP

This [International Women's Day](#) (March 8) and [Canadian Women Physicians Day](#) (March 11), Dr. Krupa brings attention to new initiatives supporting local women in medicine.



Dr. JoyAnne Krupa

When Dr. JoyAnne Krupa reflects on her journey in medicine, she recalls the challenges, the subtle and overt biases, and the realization that women in medicine—particularly in rural healthcare—needed a stronger support network.

“I think when you’re deep in training, you don’t always notice what’s happening around you because you’re just trying to get through,” Dr. Krupa shares. “But looking back, I wish I had received more support in my residency. I experienced gender bias at that time, but I didn’t have the ability or insight to manage it.”

Now a family physician in Invermere, B.C., Dr. Krupa has taken her experiences and channeled them into leadership, spearheading the East Kootenay Women in Medicine Initiative. With a focus on fostering professional development, promoting wellness, and advancing gender equity, the initiative is creating much-needed space for women in medicine to connect, learn, and advocate for change. Women in healthcare face many of the same struggles seen in other sectors—pay gaps, lower representation in leadership, gender bias in the workplace, and unequal distribution of labour at home. In rural medicine, these challenges may be amplified by isolation.

“In larger centers, women may have stronger networks and more opportunities to connect,” says Dr. Krupa. “In rural areas, there may not be a place to have a conversation about your experiences as a female physician.”

Through the Women in Medicine Initiative, operationalized by the East Kootenay Division of Family Practice, Dr. Krupa is helping to change that narrative. Conversations once left unspoken about gender based issues are now at the forefront.

“We know these biases exist,” she says. “The research is clear. Women experience gender related challenges regularly in patient interactions. For example, they are often perceived as less capable compared to male colleagues with the same experience level.”

“Women physicians are frequently assumed to be a nurse, a lab technician, or housekeeper, even after identifying themselves as a doctor. Gender also affects the types of referrals female doctors receive from other physicians, which is a factor contributing to the pay gap.”

Dr. Krupa adds women are underrepresented in top leadership positions, which can affect the overall landscape of medicine. “I’d like to see more awareness, and a cultural shift that recognizes inequities in leadership and allows women’s voices to be heard.”

One of the key upcoming events of the initiative is the Women in Medicine Retreat in June at Fairmont Hot Spring Resort, a gathering designed to support and uplift regional female physicians.

“We know that women often put everything—career, family, children—ahead of themselves,” Dr. Krupa explains. “This retreat is about saying: Your wellness matters. Your professional development matters. We want to equip you with the tools to thrive.”

With renowned keynote speaker Dr. Jane Healey (Physician Financial Independence moderator) and sessions covering financial literacy, leadership, and personal wellness, the retreat aims to address the needs identified by female physicians in the East Kootenay. But beyond the learning opportunities, Dr. Krupa says the most valuable aspect of the Women in Medicine Initiative is connection.

“It’s incredible to see how many women are showing up for these conversations,” she says. “That shared experience is powerful.”

Dr. Krupa hopes that initiatives like this will lead to lasting change—not just in support networks but at a systemic level. She aims to advocate for improved maternity leave and empower more women to step into leadership with confidence and readiness.

“Women in leadership bring valuable perspective and can make meaningful change,” she says. “I want to see more women believing in themselves, stepping into leadership, and lifting each other up.”

This [International Women’s Day](#) (March 8) and [Canadian Women Physicians Day](#) (March 11), Dr. Krupa hopes to bring more attention to these issues.

“Women in medicine historically have accomplished so much to bring us into this profession,” she says. “We need to celebrate that. But we also need to keep striving for equity—to make sure the next generation of doctors can thrive in their profession.”

Beyond her leadership in gender equity, Dr. Krupa is an advocate for mental health and addictions care in the East Kootenay. As the physician co-lead for the Adult Mental Health and Substance Use Shared Care project, she is strengthening services through collaboration and education. Her interest for this field was sparked while providing care in a prison setting where she witnessed firsthand the complexities of addiction and recovery. She now supports patients locally through the OAT clinic in Invermere.