

2024 CNSS Lifetime Achievement Award (Charles Drake Medal)



Dr. James T. Rutka, 2024 recipient



It is our honour to present the CNSS 2024 – Charles Drake Medal – Lifetime Achievement Award to Dr. James T. Rutka.



The Canadian Neurosurgical Society
Société canadienne de neurochirurgie

Dr. Rutka is an internationally celebrated translational neuro-oncologist with appointments at SickKids and the University of Toronto (UofT). He is a Neurosurgeon and Senior Scientist in the Cell Biology Program at SickKids. He is also a Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and holds the RS McLaughlin Chair within the Department of Surgery at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Rutka was born in Toronto, educated at Princeton University and Queen's University Medical School, and completed an internship at McGill University prior to entering UofT's Neurosurgery Training Program in 1982. He pursued further training at the University of California, San Francisco and Juntendo University, Tokyo. In 1990, he joined SickKids and secured a position with the surgical staff in the Division of Paediatric Neurosurgery. In the three decades since he joined SickKids, Dr. Rutka's research laboratory has made incredible breakthroughs on devastating brain tumours that affect children, called astrocytomas and medulloblastomas. Dr. Rutka has also cultivated significant expertise and is widely published on the surgical treatment of epilepsy in children.

His work has attracted international attention, earned him numerous distinctions and accolades, and positioned Canada as a front-runner in the study of brain tumours and epilepsy surgery. He is admired for his thirty years of leadership in

neuro-oncology and epilepsy, his research discoveries, and his ongoing ground-breaking science.

Dr. Rutka has mentored an extensive number of trainees from around the world over his career. He has supervised 22 graduate students, 28 post-doctoral fellows, and 5 post-graduate MDs. Many of his trainees have gone on to establish world renowned laboratories, including Drs. Michael Taylor and Peter Dirks who have revolutionized the field of paediatric oncology in their own fields.

Dr. Rutka is an exemplary surgeon and scientist of extraordinary intellect, who is dedicated to excellence in research and in paediatric care. He is recognized around the world for his field-changing work in neuro-oncology and the implementation of basic research within the clinical areas of paediatric oncology and paediatric neurosurgery. He is an invaluable contributor of innovative and ground-breaking science, and has an unwavering commitment to addressing the most challenging conditions affecting paediatric patients. His leadership and visionary approach to research work, his contributions to Canada and beyond, as well as his obvious investigative and clinical excellence make Dr. Rutka the most ideal and deserving recipient of this distinction.

View previous recipients at: cnsf.org/cnss/about-cnss/lifetime-achievement-award