

Dr. Louis Hugo Francescutti is a native Montrealer who went west, fell in love with the open space and clear blue skies of Alberta and never left. Previously, he has worked as an emergency medical technician in the Arctic and as a professional photographer with a studio in Old Montreal. For many Albertans, Dr. Francescutti has become synonymous with public health and safety. He received his combined MD / PhD from the University of Alberta in 1987 and, while training as a general surgery resident, became fascinated with the subject of trauma. He went on to complete further studies in injury while doing a Masters of Public Health and a preventive medicine residency at Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health in Baltimore. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and a Fellow of the American College of Preventive Medicine.

In 1995 he returned to Edmonton to become an emergency and preventive medicine physician at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. In that role, he continued to witness first hand the devastating impact of preventable injuries and made it his mission to continue to promote injury prevention. Over the past two and a half decades, Dr. Francescutti spearheaded a number of public safety awareness initiatives and campaigns, including the development of an award winning multimedia injury prevention program for teens called HEROES. He has also developed an innovative emergency medical response computer program that lets emergency responders better treat and track injuries at the scene.

He has chaired numerous committees and task forces that deal with public health and injury prevention. He is also a professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta and a frequent national health columnist for television and radio. He has given over a thousand presentations world wide on the topic of injuries.

In 2005, he was selected as one of Alberta's Hundred Physicians of the Century.

In 2007, he was awarded a Champion for Children Award and a Paul Harris Fellowship from the North East Edmonton Rotary Club.

Coalition for Cellphone-Free Driving

Dr. Louis Hugo Francescutti, Cate Burant-Fernuik

Summary: In Alberta, injuries are the leading cause of death for people aged 1 to 44 years and motor vehicle related injuries account for the majority of these deaths under the age of 34. Transportation related injury and fatality rates in Alberta have consistently been among the highest in the country. Alberta Transportation has estimated that driver distraction/error was behind more than 90% of Alberta's traffic crashes. Distraction due to cellphone use while driving is believed to be one of the major reasons behind increased risk of injuries and collisions. The risk of injury increases 4 – 6 times for both hand-held and hands-free cellphone users. Drivers using a cellphone are as impaired as drunk drivers with .08 level of blood alcohol.

Methods: Hence, there was an urgent need to form a coalition which can develop and advance policies and guidelines for cellphone-free driving. The Coalition for Cellphone-Free Driving is a graduate student-led initiative that was established in 2005. In 2006, the Coalition expanded from a regional initiative to a provincial initiative by holding 9 back-to-back media events press events across Alberta on the same day launching the Pan-Alberta Coalition for Cellphone-Free Driving.

Conclusion: Extensive print, radio and television media coverage resulted from this unique way of bringing attention to the issue of cellphone use while driving. In 2007 an Advisory Group was formed by Coalition stakeholders. Education resources were developed to assist companies and organizations with communications about cellphone-free policies and a provincial public opinion survey on cellphone use while driving was commissioned. Ongoing growth of the Coalition is supported by 23 stakeholders, which include corporations, regional health authorities, organizations, academic institutions and individuals.

Website:www.cellphonefreedriving.com