



2026 NSA MEDALIST

Dr. James T. Rutka

79th Annual Meeting, June 14 - 17, 2026
Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

The Neurosurgical Society of America is honored to bestow the 2026 NSA Medal to Dr. James T. Rutka.



James Rutka's academic journey began at Princeton University where he studied Chemical Engineering before earning his Doctor of Medicine from Queen's University. He continued to pursue his medical training, completing an internship at McGill University's Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal, Quebec. Rutka then embarked on his neurosurgery residency training at the University of Toronto. He later went on to pursue graduate studies at the University of California, San Francisco, where he earned his PhD in Experimental Pathology from the School of Graduate Studies.

After completing his residency training, Rutka received certification in neurosurgery as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (FRCSC). He then completed a clinical fellowship in microvascular neurosurgery with Kenichiro Sugita at Nagoya University, followed by a post-doctoral research fellowship in molecular immunology under the supervision of Ko Okumura at Juntendo University in Tokyo.

Throughout his career, Rutka has made significant contributions to the field of neurosurgery. He specializes in paediatric neurosurgery at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) and is a Senior Scientist in the Research Institute at SickKids. He is particularly interested in the neurosurgical treatment of children with brain tumours and epilepsy. Rutka's research interests lie in the molecular biology of human brain tumours, specifically in determining the mechanisms by which brain tumours grow and invade.

Rutka is also the Director of the Arthur and Sonia Labatt Brain Tumour Research Centre at SickKids, where he is leading cutting-edge research into the molecular and genetic basis of brain tumours. He is a prolific author and has published over 500 peer-reviewed papers, chapters, and books on various topics related to neurosurgery and neuroscience. He also holds the position of Editor-in-Chief for the Journal of Neurosurgery, which is considered one of the most prestigious neurosurgical journals in the world, and is the only Canadian to have held this position. In addition to his research and clinical work, Dr. Rutka has been committed to education and mentorship throughout his career. He has supervised and has been a mentor to countless medical students and residents.

Rutka has been recognized with numerous awards and honours for his contributions to the field of neurosurgery. In



2015, he was named an Officer of the Order of Canada, one of the country's highest honours, for his outstanding contributions to medical research and his commitment to improving the lives of children with brain tumours. Dr. Rutka's professional life has been characterized by his unwavering dedication to advancing our understanding of brain tumours and improving the lives of patients through research, education, and clinical care.

Dr. Rutka presented a landmark, phase I clinical trial, at the 2026 Annual Meeting: MR-guided focused ultrasound delivery of doxorubicin in pediatric patients with diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas research. We were honored to have Jim and Mari join us in Grand Cayman for this special event.