

As a family doctor who has been in practice about forty years, I thought I would jot down a few thoughts about Medicine as I have seen it evolve in Windsor since I first arrived in the summer of 1964.

The “old timers” welcomed the “new boys” with open arms. I started with Dr. Michael Ziter, an amazing clinician (who is still working by the way, assisting at surgery). He taught me about the politics, the economics and the do’s and don’ts of practice in Windsor, I still marvel at how he could quickly go from one language to another (he speaks five or six fluently) and how loyal his many patients were to him.

After approximately a year I went out on my own as others had done before me. The “old timers” happily passed the torch. (Mac Masters, Frank Scarfone, Frank DeMarco Sr., Vern Messer, Val Drkulec, Johnny Corr, Nick Alewick, Larry Lefaive.) We were encouraged to open up new practices to take the overflows so that the “old guys” could start slowing down. If only we could do so now. We are now the “old guys”. (Steve Radin, Mike Irwin, Roy Tayfel, Dave Fisher, Sal Kizis, Paul Dedumets, John McKinnon, Mike MacKinnon.)

The government in the early 1990’s made a short sighted and ill fated decision to decrease medical school enrolments and we, as a society, are paying for it now It will take at least ten years before we have enough family Doctors to cover the losses brought on by death and retirement. The average family Doctor in Canada is fifty-seven years old and close to retirement with no one to pass his practice to. (Jamie Laird, Charlie Laing, Claire Sanborn, Shannon Sanborn, Sol Goldenberg, Morris Asa, C. Peterson, Walter Percival, Stan Oleksiuk, Al Shuren, Joe Berecz, George Fraser, Henri Breault, Rick Boyd, David McLeod, Ian McLeod, Rick Anderson, Ted Anderson, Ken Zade, Bill Borre, R. E. Anderson.)

A typical day began with “rounds” at all four hospitals. I can still see R. E. Anderson zooming by in his old convertible, hair flying wildly, as he made his way from one hospital to another as I headed in the opposite direction – going to the hospital he just left. Invariably we would get caught at Tecumseh near Crawford by shunting trains and the air would turn blue with our comments.

“Rounds” at the hospital were fun and the “head nurse” always made rounds with her Doctors. (Norm Thibert, Percy Demers, Bob Tinning, Tommy Poisson, Colin Wong, Ray LaRocque, Honore Schlller, Jerry Kopstein, Dennis Brisson, Dennis Dionne, Naomi Guindon, Ken James, Bob Haliburton, Jack Barber, Ron Taylor).

Nowadays, Hospitalists, who are Doctors hired by the hospital, do “rounds”. Family Doctors have found it economically and medically not feasible to attend to their patients in hospital anymore, for a multitude of reasons. Time restraints, attendance at meetings, and staffing assignments are a few of the reasons why family physicians no longer make “rounds”. (I just recently stopped going to the hospital myself.)

We also used to assist at surgery in the morning after very early rounds and go to the office in the afternoons. Now we are in the office the whole day in general. (Keith Macleod, Jack Fry, Allan Warwaruk, John Doherty, Tommy Echlin, Allan Taylor, Tom McKenzie, Rance Smeeton, Bob Bell, G. R. McCormick, George Yee, Dave Paterson, Charlie McFarlane, Ernie Zarzour, William Gatfield, Eddie Winbaum.)

Most family Doctors enjoyed delivering babies. This was a real fun part of practice. It was generally a very happy time for patients and their families and you enjoyed their happiness. If you ever got into trouble Keith or Jack or Al were soon there to help you out. Now hardly any family Doctors deliver babies.

In the early days we had Windsor Medical Services, one of the first pre-paid medical plans in the world. People came from all over to study it and copy it. It was the forerunner of OSIP, which later became OHIP. It was terminated by the government of the day, as was PSI, AMS and all other plans as they gave us "Universal Health Care". (Murray O'Neil, Robert McKay, Gene Varga, Moody Edwards, Archie MacVicar, Moe Daniel, Victor Kleider, George Stecko, George Bernstein, Mert Bernstein, Gordon Jasey, Irv Strathman, Walter Baranowski, Bill Taylor, Jack Weinstock, Francis Wong, Don Boyer, Elliott Keith.)

We enjoyed the good times, but also we agonized about the bad times. Losing a patient was always and still is an emotional roller coaster ride that is extremely unforgettable and indescribable.

I enjoyed working the Emergency Room. In the past we worked twelve-hour shifts and every Doctor on staff took their turn. This was before the era of the ER Specialist. I was actually paid by some reluctant physicians to work their "shift" in the ER as they regarded the emergency room as the "snake pit" to which they hated to be relegated. Some eye specialists hadn't seen measles or chicken pox since medical school and were frankly afraid they would make mistakes. The emergency room is fast and furious but crisp and precise and things got done quickly and efficiently. One physician Lazar Yovanovich, was an elderly gentleman who also enjoyed the emergency room. He was sharp and smart and quick witted and worked the ER to "keep his batteries charged". (Bob Andrew, Frank DeMarco Jr., Al Denys, Bing Jeun, Jacob Daniel, Kal Thomas, Doug Thomas.)

The Essex County Medical Society is the local medical society for Doctors to enjoy medical meeting and conferences and also some social activities like golf days, curling, dinner meetings, etc. It is a venue for us to relax and repose with each other and to enjoy away from the rigors of practice. Years ago, every Wednesday afternoon we had a bowling league, later followed by a golf league. We also invited the dentists and pharmacists to our outings.

The loyalty of patients I have found in my practice is such a valuable commodity, that it bears special mention. I still have patients who have been with me since the 1964 opening

of my practice. We have grown together. I have delivered their daughters and their daughter's daughters so I am now their great grand "uncle" I guess.

It is a thrill showing youngsters the letters or pictures drawn by their mothers or grandmothers twenty five years earlier. (Stan Spooner, Bill Sproat, Val Spakowski, Frank Goyeau, Bob Schreiner.)

I could go on but it appears I've come full circle. Now I'm an "old timer" and what new guy will take over my practice if and when I retire?

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