

## CHOOSING FAMILY MEDICINE PROVIDES DIVERSE WORK EXPERIENCE FOR PHYSICIANS

By Peterborough Family Health Team & GPHSF

The Peterborough area is fortunate to have a very strong relationship with the Queen's University Family Medicine Program. Each year, as part of the Post Graduate Medical Residency at Queen's, six students come to the Peterborough area to finish the final two years of their program and gain valuable experience to allow them to start their own practices. The Peterborough area has a great reputation within the program, thanks in no small part to the commitment of our local family physicians who welcome the students to the area and work closely with them to gain as much experience as they can. That sense of community and camaraderie has meant that many of the students, once finished their Post Graduate Residency, choose to remain in the Peterborough area to work.

Adam Vanderleest is one of those students who is finishing their final year of residency in Peterborough. After completing a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology from McMaster University, Adam received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western University, then entered the Queen's Family Medicine Program and is currently completing his final year of residency in the Kawarthas.

Adam was attracted to the Peterborough area as a place where a resident can gain a variety of work experiences, from office-based family practice, hospital work, student health and even working in the Emergency Room. Adam is very complimentary of what he has experienced so far, adding "Peterborough is an excellent place to get



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— Adam Vanderleest

variety in your work as a physician. Furthermore, the city has great parks, good trails, and you can easily get to the lakes for a canoe trip, or if you prefer to head to the city to catch a concert or sports game, you can do that too."

Although just starting his journey as a physician, Adam has cherished the relationships he

has already been able to develop with his patients. He takes great pride and is honoured to be a trusted advisor, someone they can talk to about things that they do not feel comfortable speaking to others about. "I enjoy the challenge of trying to meet patients where they are. I find that when people come to the office, they always need something different, whether it be medical expertise, emotional support, a safe space to talk, or information on local resources. Every encounter is different, but it can be very rewarding to be able to support people on their health journeys."

He also is very complimentary of the physician community in the Peterborough area and has been able to develop many strong professional relationships while here, adding "I find that the physician community is fairly tight knit and supportive. In my two years here I feel as though I've met and worked with many different colleagues who I could trust to ask for help."

As Adam is coming to the end of his two-year residency in Peterborough, he looks to continue in Family Medicine, which is something he is very passionate about. "In a time where family medicine in Canada is struggling so much, I think we have an opportunity to show the difference it can make to people to have a family doctor who cares for them. Hopefully that can help us, as citizens, to realize the greater changes we need to make in order to make family practice a sustainable career for physicians. This is necessary for every Canadian to continue to receive high quality health-care for generations to come."



## Extraordinary Canadian doctors

ON NATIONAL PHYSICIANS' DAY 2023, WE RECOGNIZE AND HONOUR ALL CANADIANS WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO SERVE IN THE FIELD OF MEDICINE.

By Andrea Douglas

Throughout our country's history, many doctors have gone above and beyond their regular practice to help others by expanding our knowledge, inspiring us, or blazing a trail for future generations.

**Advocating for women's education – Jennie Kidd Trout (1841-1921) and Emily Stowe (1831-1903)** both worked as teachers before dreaming of becoming doctors. Stowe applied to the Toronto School of Medicine in 1865, but was denied, as it would not admit women at that time.

Together, the two women fought to attend a one-year qualifying course at the Toronto School, and they were eventually accepted in 1871, despite facing opposition from many of their male professors and peers.

Trout graduated from medical college in Pennsylvania in 1875, returned to Canada, and passed the examinations of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons, making her the first female physician licensed to practise medicine in Canada. She specialized in women's health, and even after retiring she continued to advocate for medical education for Canadian women, becoming a trustee and benefactor of the Kingston Women's Medical College.

Stowe never wrote the exam, but in 1880 she received her medical licence on the basis of her credentials and her earlier work. She fought throughout her career for women's rights, becoming a suffragette and helping to create the first women's medical college in Canada in 1883.

**Caring for the Black community – Anderson Rufin Abbott's (1837-1913)** parents came to Canada in 1835 as free people of colour. Abbott went to school in the Elgin Settlement, near Chatham, Ont., and then attended the Toronto School of Medicine. In 1861, he received his licence to prac-

tise from the Medical Board of Upper Canada – making him the first Canadian-born Black doctor. During the American Civil War, he was one of eight Black surgeons to serve in the Union Army. He became surgeon-in-chief at Freedmen's Hospital, now known as Howard University Hospital, in Washington, D.C., which was the first hospital of its kind to provide medical treatment for formerly enslaved people. Returning to Chatham in 1871, he established a medical practice and also became Kent County's first Black coroner.

**Shining a light in darkness** – During the First World War, while serving as a medical officer with the First Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery, **John McCrae (1872-1918)** wrote *In Flanders Fields*. McCrae had enjoyed writing poems and short stories since he was a high school student in Guelph, Ont. He continued writing while studying as a doctor; some of his work was published in magazines. In October 1899, he postponed a fellowship at McGill University to fight in the South African War. He returned to Canada in 1904, practising as a pathologist and teaching medicine. But when Britain declared war on Germany, McCrae enlisted again, this time to help as a doctor. In April 1915, McCrae was in the trenches near Ypres, Belgium, during heavy fighting, where he tended to hundreds of wounded per day. McCrae was inspired to write a poem to give voice to those he could not save. Today, *In Flanders Fields* symbolizes the sacrifices of all who serve, and is recited at Remembrance Day ceremonies in Canada and abroad.

**Exploring space** – The Canadian Astronaut Corps, a unit of the Canadian Space Agency, trains astronauts as crew members for U.S. and Russian space missions. The CSA tends to recruit

scientists, engineers and medical doctors to contribute to space research. Notable doctors who have been chosen to blast off are **Roberta Lynn Bondar (b. 1945)**, who in 1992 became Canada's first female astronaut and the first neurologist in space; **Robert Thirsk (b. 1953)**, who holds the Canadian record for the most time spent in space, at 204 days and 18 hours, and was the first astronaut ever to write a newspaper article and have it published while in orbit; and **Dafydd Rhys Williams (b. 1954)**, who performed three spacewalks while at the International Space Station in 2007, making him the third Canadian to perform a spacewalk and the Canadian who has done the most spacewalks.

**Making knowledge accessible** – **James Heilman (b. 1979 or 1980)** became interested in editing Wikipedia articles in 2008, during a slow emergency room night shift, when he searched on a medical topic and found it full of errors. As he told the Spectator in a 2011 interview, "I realized that I could fix it. I made a huge number of edits and improved the quality a great deal. I sort of became hooked from there." As a volunteer administrator under the username Doc James, he now edits Wikipedia articles up to 60 hours per week, improving the free encyclopedia's health-related content, making it accessible and accurate for all – and he encourages other doctors to take part. He also contributes to Wiki Project Med Foundation, an initiative with Translators Without Borders to translate important articles in English into minority languages. Wikipedia is now a significant source of reliable health information – Heilman estimates approximately 60 to 70 per cent of physicians use the resource.

Sources: Canadian Medical Hall of Fame; TheNobelPrize.org; Canadian Encyclopedia; Ontario Heritage Trust; Veterans.gc.ca; Wikipedia; Hamilton Spectator