

“The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head. Often the best part of your work will have nothing to do with potions and powders, but with the exercise of an influence of the strong upon the weak, of the righteous upon the wicked, of the wise upon the foolish.”

- Sir William Osler

Hi Everyone

The first Departmental Acknowledgement of 2014 goes to **Sam Shemie** and is the by-product of serendipity and two decades of a remarkable career trajectory.

The serendipity is the result of the US air traffic system's inability to handle profound cold which led to the cancellation on Tuesday of our scheduled Grand Rounds speaker from Iowa. This prompted Patti Li our brand new (first week on the job!) Grand Rounds co-ordinator to be thrown right away into the fire to come up with a replacement. In a remarkable testimony to Departmental depth and personal willingness ("pas ma job" is simply not part of his lexicon) within two hours Sam Shemie was lined up to give rounds on Wednesday AM.

Sam gave a superb talk entitled "Evolving Concepts in Physiology of Modern Death" that brought us up to date on current concepts and challenging issues as we grapple as a medical community to define "death" in a way that respects hallowed ethical principles, incorporates what is known scientifically, and enables the miracle that is organ transplantation.

Sam's career has indeed been a remarkable trajectory. A graduate of McGill where he received the Holmes Gold medal for being at the very top of his graduating class, Sam undertook a residency in pediatrics here before venturing to the Hospital for Sick Children (btw where exactly is the Hospital for Well Children??) for a fellowship in the then emerging sub-specialty of pediatric critical care medicine. Sam stayed on in Toronto for over a decade before a definite familial centripetal pull to Montreal (thanks to his wife Carol) brought him back to McGill and the Montreal Children's Hospital about a decade ago. Sam is now a Professor of the Department of Pediatrics and holds the Bertran Loeb Chair and Research Consortium in Organ and Tissue Donation at the University of Ottawa.

Sam has focused his academic efforts on a daunting topic that most of us spend a lifetime avoiding; death. He has literally attacked, in his typical "take no prisoners" modus operandi, along various tracks death both as an event and an issue to weave a tapestry that incorporates the evidence of science, the induction of ethics, the limits of law and the imperatives of good policy. Sam has led numerous national and international initiatives related to defining death and enabling transplantation. He has forged a remarkable level of national and international consensus that attests to a political skill that is quite simply staggering when considered objectively. He has emerged as the key international leader in this domain and the current "go-to" guy at the World Health Organization (WHO) on this topic. His work has had enormous translational and pragmatic implications.

It is often said that the Professor is under-appreciated in his own house and through this acknowledgement I hope to at least rectify this in Sam's case. We all should be cognizant of this giant in the field amongst us with whom we can frequently interact with.

Have a great weekend everyone

Michael