

“It cannot be too often or too forcibly brought home to us that the hope of the profession is with the men who do its daily work in general practice.”

Sir William Osler

Note to reader: If Osler was alive now I hope he would amend his quote to "....with the men and women....."

Hi Everyone

This week's individual Departmental Acknowledgement was suggested by Kent Saylor. Not only does it allow us to reflect on the extra-ordinary and steadfast clinical work of one of our members, it also enables me to highlight a longstanding unique Departmental and hospital program.

You don't have to spend much time on our wards, in our OPD or in our ER to realize the large number of First Nations (e.g. Cree and Inuit) children and their families that we directly care for. This observation leads to two conclusions; 1. That these children and their families incur a disproportionate burden of health issues in our population reflecting the incredible influence of social determinants on child health and well-being, and 2. We have evolved a longstanding and special relationship with these peoples and the far-away regions they inhabit.

This week's Departmental Acknowledgement goes to Dr. Margaret Berry. I will quote from Gary Pেকেles to introduce Margaret.

"After completing her pediatric residency at McGill in the late 70s, Margaret worked as a pediatric consultant in Rouyn Noranda for a decade, She returned to do a fellowship in Neonatology at a time in her career when most of us would be daunted by that prospect. She completed an Msc in Epidemiology. She worked as a neonatologist here until she joined the Northern and Native Child Health Program in 2005. Her dedication to the health and welfare of the people she cares for is outstanding. She will always go the extra mile, never taking a short cut. She is held in the highest regard by the family physicians and nurse practitioners on the Hudson Bay Coast with whom she collaborates. When Margaret is following a patient, we are all reassured."

An example of this dedication was the impetus for Kent's welcomed suggestion. I will quote Kent's email to me to do full justice to his suggestion. Not only do Kent's words highlight Margaret's good work, it also pays tribute to the co-operative spirit that permeates the various services of the Children's in getting things done for the good of our patients. In these challenging times this co-operative spirit will be essential in preserving our Mission.

"At the end of November 2012 one of my patients from the north was here in Montreal for some follow-up visits. He is a very large (over 100 kg) 13 year-old boy with severe autism. Due to some of the findings during that visit it was decided that he needed a CT scan of the head and a lumbar puncture. I found this out on a Thursday afternoon and I was scheduled to be away at a conference the following day. It is hard enough to try and arrange these studies on a non-autistic child but we all know this is a major challenge for an autistic child who requires general anaesthesia. Luckily he was scheduled for a dental exam under GA for the following day. I went to see Margaret for help. She did not hesitate for one second. Together we made a plan with radiology, dentistry and anaesthesia to coordinate the dental exam, CT scan and LP under general anaesthesia all at the same time. This was no small task. When I left on Thursday we had a plan but I knew there was a lot of room for error. I received a call from Margaret on Friday at 1 pm that all the procedures were done and he was packaged and ready to go back home! I saw the family up north the following week and they were very happy with the service they received from everyone that day. I owe a great deal of thanks to Margaret Berry for taking charge of this case and also a great deal of thanks to our colleagues in radiology, dentistry and anaesthesia for their help and understanding."

Kent's suggestion also gives us an opportunity to consider the history and present status of our Northern Program. Once again I will quote from words written by Gary Pেকেles.

"The Northern and Native Child Health Program of MCH/McGill has existed with a variety of names and administrative arrangements for over forty years. Over the years, it has been guided by the likes of the late Jack Charters, Mike Moffatt, Alan Coates and Nick Steinmetz. It started with contracts with the federal gov't, the provincial gov't and was the first University based program to engage directly in agreements with First Nations and Inuit autonomous Health Authorities. We are their partners.

Every year about 300 First Nations and Inuit children are hospitalised at the MCH. By and large they are sicker, more complex and more challenging than our typical patient. We all learn a lot from them, medically, culturally and personally. There are about 750 children seen in our outpatient clinics, most having 5 or more visits when they are here. But most important are the patients who do not come south. Our pediatricians are in constant contact with practitioners in northern communities, providing advice and directing care from a distance. They each visit their communities on a regular basis, spending typically a week each month away from their homes and families. All told, every year about 2200 kids referred by northern clinicians are seen by MCH pediatricians in their own villages and towns, This represents 15% of all children living in the areas we serve."

Toques off (not for long in this frigid weather though) to all those who make this Program the vital success it is.

Have a great weekend everyone.

Michael