

**“It’s a wicked life, but what the hell, the stars ain’t falling down”
Bob Dylan**

Hi Everyone,

This week’s Departmental Acknowledgement particularly strikes home for me as I have seen this particular movie play since its very beginning at the MCH. The Acknowledgement goes to my colleague **Chantal Poulin** on the occasion of the announcement that she will be receiving this year’s Award for Medical Excellence from the Montreal Children’s Hospital Foundation.

I first met Chantal years ago (probably more than we both care to admit to) in the early 1990s when she ventured down to the MCH to interview for an available Canadian transfer position in our pediatric neurology residency training program. Originally from a one-stop sign, no-traffic-lights (I kid you not) small town in the Gaspé Peninsula, Chantal had done her medical education and pediatric training at the Université Laval in Québec City. Our neurology group was struck by how quiet and shy (!) she was during the interviews. Little did we know that her lack of speech reflected a then profound unfamiliarity with the English language. We took a chance on her and we certainly were not disappointed.

Throughout her training, Chantal impressed us with her work ethic, determination and rapidly evident clinical acumen. Very early on, it was evident she was a master clinician with a unique feel for the neurological history and examination and rather encyclopedic knowledge of differential diagnoses. Superimposed on this was a remarkably prescient and accurate gut instinct for selecting investigations parsimoniously that enabled an accurate diagnosis.

It was a no brainer to take Chantal on as staff and she moved into Ken Silver’s old office on A-5. There, she became a clinical workhorse in the Division. In this era of sub-specialization, she really does it all in child neurology; intractable epilepsy, neuromuscular disorders, degenerative diseases, neurodevelopmental disorders. She also became a crackerjack electrophysiologist, doing both EEG and EMG/NCS studies (a rare double feat), whose expertise extended into the OR where she assists our surgeons in putting the “selective” into selective dorsal rhizotomy and defining the limits of resectable cortex through electrocorticography in seizure surgery.

One aspect of Chantal’s skills that became evident as staff is her commitment to our teaching and the educational mission. She will shortly give up her role as the Program Director for PGME in Pediatric Neurology. She has served in this role with an enthusiasm and dedication that has seen the program flourish. Indeed, over the past 25 years, it has trained the most Royal College certified child neurologists of any program in Canada. It’s a tribute to her origins at Université Laval that the entire compliment of Québec City child neurologists (n=6) trained here. She has also received the Department of Neurology & Neurosurgery Teaching Award on more than one occasion.

A final comment on Chantal’s excellence is my observation (our office were next to each other for close to 20 years) of how many Department members have trusted the care of their children with a neurological issue to her over the years. Indeed, is there a higher compliment that one physician can pay another?

Please join me in congratulating Chantal on her Award. Better yet, consider attending the MCHF Ball on May 19th. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Have a great weekend everyone!

Michael

Michael Shevell, MDCM, FRCPC, FCAHS
Chairman, Department of Pediatrics
Professor (with Tenure)

Departments of Pediatrics and Neurology/Neurosurgery
McGill University

Guyda Chair in Pediatrics

Pediatrician-in-Chief
Montreal Children's Hospital/
McGill University Health Centre (MUHC)

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