

April 23, 2021

Hi Everyone!

As my term winds down, many members have reached out and commented on how much they have enjoyed the Departmental Acknowledgments over the years.

There have been over 400 during my mandate. It is important to note that it is not about 'who' gets a DA, but rather about 'what' the DA is about. Specifically, what value is being highlighted that should be celebrated and be aspirational for us in modelling our activities for the benefit of our hospital and academic community.



I thought it would be fun to pull a specific well-received DA from the vault as it serves as a very concrete example of our trajectory and journey over the past decade. It also comes on the 6th anniversary next week of the first displacement of a unit (neonatology) of the Department of Pediatrics to the Glen on April 26, 2015. The remainder of the MCH-based segment of the Department would make that journey 4 weeks later.

So here is the DA to The Old Lady that was given in May 2015.

*"I have given an acknowledgement to individuals, teams, Divisions, trainees, staff, physicians, health professionals of varying stripe, administrators, patients and support personnel. Never have I given it to a place, but on this date, it's fitting that the Acknowledgement go to the building at 2300 Tupper aka (at least to me) "The Old Lady".*

*On Sunday, just two days from now, the Old Lady will stop being what it has been for just under a hundred years - a hospital. A place of comfort, healing, nurturing and help for individuals affected by illness seeking relief from what ails them. The first section built was the F-wing in 1919 as the Montreal Western Hospital which over time became the Western Division of the Montreal General Hospital. The building on Tupper was added in the midst of the Depression in 1931 with the A-wing built as a nurse's residence in 1954. In 1956, the Montreal General Hospital opened up on the mountain overlooking the city where it remains presently incorporating its Western Division, and in December 1956 the Montreal Children's Hospital moved down from Cedar into the then empty building at 2300 Tupper.*

*When the Children's opened at 2300 Tupper in 1956, pediatrics itself was still a young specialty. Most illnesses requiring hospitalization were infectious and indeed their roster consisted largely of that which has since been vanquished by vaccinations: polio, measles, mumps, rubella, bacterial meningitis, pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus etc. Surgery was rudimentary with no cardiac*

*bypass or intra-operative MRI. Death in childhood unfortunately was a common occurrence. Antibiotics were few. Childhood cancers were a death sentence to those affected.*

*Despite these limitations, the Old Lady, and more importantly the staff that came to work within its walls, stood ready to help, to do what it could for afflicted children and their families. Without discrimination. Not only was it a place of care, it also was a place of steadfast learning and education to all health professions. It was also a place for cutting edge research, with some key advances in child health occurring on the site. Over time, medicine became more robust. Infectious diseases were largely conquered through vaccinations, antibiotics and antiviral agents, but new pathogens emerged. New technologies were developed to improve diagnosis and intervention. Technical supports were developed to support failing organs enabling recovery and survival. Some cancers were effectively cured. Neonatology worked its magic and premature babies previously left to die in the case room were now surviving. Neurology moved from a descriptive to an interventional discipline.*

*However, new patterns of illness and challenges emerged in the perpetual never-ending dance between health & disease. Through all this, the Old Lady stood firm. She was updated and adapted as best as could be. Most importantly, a vibrant organic community over nearly six decades was forged within its walls that dedicated itself to child health. It's a community we all know well. The place is just the right size so that everyone just about knows everyone else. It was also the kind of place, for the most intangible of reasons, that people didn't want to leave. Despite its obvious limitations and infirmities of age, it was a place that all grew attached to. But like everything in this world, time overtook the Old Lady and age took its toll. A limit to adaptability was reached.*

*The simple fact of the matter is that we are now two decades into the 21st Century and we are not now in a 21st century hospital which the children and families we care for deserve. Quite simply, it is time to leave for something much, much better for our patients.*

*We can only imagine the stories the Old Lady could tell. Of miracles. Of losses. Of prayers answered. Of prayers never heard. Of hard work. Of dedication. Of discovery. Of joy. Of sorrow. Of learning. Of love. Of hope. The narratives she could tell if she could speak.*

*Actually if you think about it, these are OUR stories. Maybe that is why we are all so attached to the place despite its physical failings. It's now time for us to say goodbye. To finally walk after over two decades of planning through the wide open door before us. To accept new challenges at a new Children's at 1001 Decarie. To write new narratives and chapters in our history. It's finally time to let the Old Lady go. To let her go into the good night.*

*But let us not forget the values, the memories and most importantly the community we have at 2300 Tupper. These are our most precious commodities that we simply can't box up and transfer. As we journey inevitably forward as we must, let's not leave these precious icons behind at 2300 Tupper. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you at our new professional home.*

*And I must humbly add that it is an awesome experience to be one of the leaders of this community at this point in its history. I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together as a team."*

For the many of us who made that physical and metaphorical journey take the time to reflect this weekend on the then and the now.

Have a great weekend everyone!

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