

The Battle of Alberta



his training he returned to Calgary to set up a rheumatology practise in 1954. In the early 1960s, the convalescent and rehabilitation wing was built at the Calgary General Hospital and 30 beds were designated for rheumatology patients.

In 1966, the Faculty of Medicine was created at the University of Calgary, with the first medical students being admitted in 1970. The RDU of the University of Calgary was formally established at the General Hospital in 1973 with Dr. Howard as the first Head. To complement Dr. Howard, Dr. Martin Atkinson was recruited to join him at the Calgary General Hospital.

The next head of the Calgary RDU, from 1975 to 1985, was Dr. Doug Kinsella, whose research interest was sero-negative arthritis. His successor, Dr. Marvin Fritzler, was keenly involved in researching autoimmune diseases and serology. With Dr. Fritzler as Head, the RDU moved from the General Hospital to the University of Calgary and the Foothills Hospital. Dr. Atkinson remained as the clinical director at the Calgary General Hospital.

Under the leadership of Dr. Fritzler, the Arthritis Chair was established. The first individual to occupy this chair was Dr. Mark Adams, whose research focused on osteoarthritis. By now the Calgary RDU was well established, boasting research, resident training, and patient care.

From its humble beginnings in Banff, we now have 25 rheumatologists (both adult and pediatric) practicing in Calgary.

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Banff Mineral Springs Hospital, circa 1930.

“The Battle of Alberta” used to refer to a Flames/Oilers hockey game. Now it means a lighthearted – but very serious – challenge between rheumatology clinics in Calgary and Edmonton to see which can generate the most support for The Arthritis Society’s **Walk to Fight Arthritis**.

Dr. Stephanie Keeling, rheumatologist at The Edmonton Clinic, and team captain of the *Arthritis Annihilators* says, “We were narrowly edged out by Calgary last year; heading into the 2015 Walk, we are pulling out all the stops to ensure we come out on top.”

For three years now, The Edmonton Clinic and the Calgary Rheumatology Clinic have squared off in a fundraising challenge with the help of rheumatologists, support staff and patients’ families. In 2014, Calgary’s *Rolling Bones* brought in \$16,523 to lead not only the challenge but the country; the *Annihilators* clocked in at \$13,542, good for third-place nationally. Together the teams eclipsed their ambitious \$30,000 target for the challenge.

Says Dr. Keeling, “When you consider how important TAS has been in supporting not only our patients, but also the development and practice of the rheumatology profession in Canada, finding a meaningful way to give back is a no-brainer.”

Over the three years that the teams have been participating, they have combined for nearly \$100,000 in funds raised.

Rolling Bones captain Terri Lupton, a nurse clinician at the Calgary Rheumatology Clinic, stresses the importance of making the challenge fun. “Whether it is our physicians taking part in a foot race or posting regular updates on each team’s fundraising totals, finding entertaining ways to get people involved in the spirit of the competition helps make it a success.”

It is exactly that spirit of giving back that lies at the heart of the **Every Member Campaign**: the CRA and TAS are partnering to raise \$2 million between them to support rheumatology recruitment and professional development programming in Canada, towards a goal of providing enough rheumatologists to support another 300,000 Canadian patients over the next five years.

Many CRA members have chosen to pledge to the campaign directly; others, like Dr. Keeling, are using the **Walk to Fight Arthritis** as their way to contribute. Either way, the funds are urgently needed to help address rheumatologist capacity concerns in many parts of the country.

“The way I see it,” says Dr. Keeling, “most of us would not be where we are in our careers if not for the support of TAS at one point or another. We owe it to them, and to our patients, to help support the next generation of researchers and clinicians.”

The 6th Annual **Walk to Fight Arthritis** takes place on Sunday June 7th. For more information, check out www.walktofightarthritis.ca.

To pledge your contribution to the **Every Member Campaign**, please contact Sandra Dow at sdow@arthritis.ca, or by phone at 416-979-7228 ext. 3343.