



Tribute to Dr. Sydney Gershon

The Division of Rheumatology in Toronto lost one of its senior statesmen on April 30, 2018, with the passing of Dr. Sydney Gershon.

Dr. Gershon graduated from the University of Ottawa in 1966. He was the first rheumatologist to join the staff at St. Michael's Hospital (SMH), holding a Courtesy Staff appointment from July 1973 until his recent passing. From all descriptions, he brought rheumatology care to SMH and set the foundation for the division as it currently exists. For his first nine years at St Mike's, he managed a five bed in-patient rheumatic disease unit, performed all the in-patient consults and delivered undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. Dr. Gershon was joined by (I am told that he hired) Dr. Rachel Shupak in 1982, setting the stage for the others to join over time.

More recently, Dr. Gershon, in addition to his courtesy privileges at St. Michael's Hospital, was on staff at West Parry Sound Health Centre and continued his active office-based practices, both locally and in the North.

The unifying theme from all who knew him highlights his absolute joy in practicing medicine – he loved to learn and he loved to meet people. He practiced true patient-centred care, working to avoid long waiting lists, seeing patients when they perceived their needs were greatest and coaching patients as they navigated the health care system.

He was recognised for his generosity as a Pioneer in the Jonas Salk Circle of Friends, which celebrates extraordinary philanthropy. Twice yearly, Syd would fly to northern clinics in Timmins and Kirkland Lake to see patients for a few days, starting early in the morning and continuing to late in the day. He described his joy in meeting people from the North, hearing their stories and helping them. He did this for 45 years with his billings for all those visits going to the March of Dimes.

To all colleagues who knew him, Syd will be remembered for popularizing the homunculus and flow charts on patient records, but he will be especially remembered for his collegiality and dedication to his patients. Our division is saddened by his passing.

Collectively, we extend our deepest sympathy to his family, and also to his patients.

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