

# Retirement Takes Planning: Practical Advice

By Jamie Henderson, MD, FRCPC

**R**etirement takes planning. The finances will take care of themselves as long as you have been diligent about your Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP). I will leave finances up to you and your financial advisers.

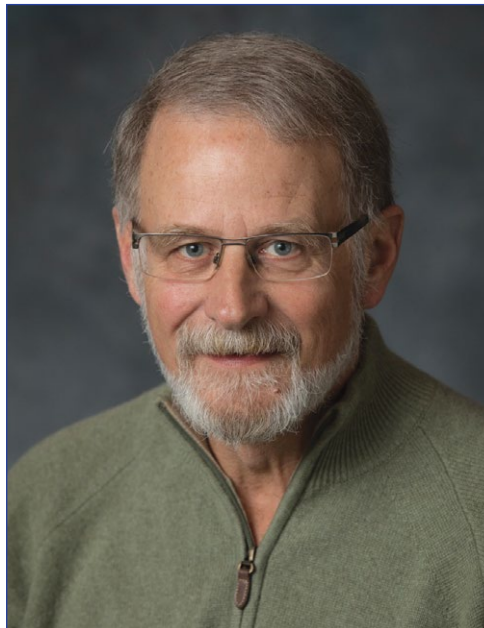
The next major decision is when to retire. This will be a personal decision, and I have no advice other than to not fear it.

Once you have an idea as to when you'll be retiring, I would check your office lease to see how much notice you have to give your landlord. Six months before my preferred date, I found I had to give one year's notice. A wrinkle I had to live with.

Finding someone to take over your practice is also a significant issue. It may require more than one person, as not everyone is keen to take on 5,000 patients. Networking at meetings, advertising on the CRA website, talking to many colleagues, looking for contacts and other techniques (like panic) still left me in a quandary, but eventually this was resolved.

A major issue was what to do with my charts. Today's practitioner wants to deal with an electronic practice. I did not have an electronic medical record (EMR). For the final year of practice I spent most, if not all, of my Sunday afternoons sitting in my office entering all my patient data on the patients I would be seeing that week, into a newly purchased EMR. I did not see another alternative as I felt only I could determine what was relevant.

After the EMR was complete, I still had to arrange for storage of the charts for the mandatory 10 years as per



regulations of our Department of Health. They still reside in my basement!

Notifying patients of my decision was another dilemma. Some wished a referral to an alternate rheumatologist of their choice rather than simply agreeing to be followed by my replacement. Many were referred before a replacement was found to ensure continuity of care of complex cases.

Once retirement took place there was a void. I took out a membership at our local YMCA and obtained a library card. Both of these helped immensely in occupying my body and mind. There were still gardening, fishing and, above all else, grandchildren to fill in the time.

Now, setting new objectives is an ongoing pursuit.

One word of advice: It took my wife and myself quite some time to determine where the money was going. There always seemed to be surprise bills that would arrive and evaporate our attempts to set money aside. We had to keep track of every expenditure every week for a year to finally be able to come up with a budget that accounts for all cash outflows. No more surprises!

I have found retirement a new beginning and not the end.

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