

Tribute to Dr. Peter Dent

By Tania Cellucci, MD, FRCPC, MScCH; Michelle Batthish, MD, FRCPC, MSc; and Maggie Larché, MBChB, MRCP(UK), PhD

It is with deep sadness that we announce that our colleague, mentor and friend Dr. Peter Dent has passed away after a long illness. Peter was extraordinarily humble, and many of you may be unaware of his extensive contributions to our community in Hamilton and beyond.

After training in both rheumatology and immunology, Peter started his career at McMaster in 1967 as a research scientist. He created Canada's first multidisciplinary program in immunology and virology. While he was chair of McMaster's Department of Pediatrics between 1980 and 1990, he had a vision of interdisciplinary collaboration and integrated non-MD scientists into the department of pediatrics, which remains one of its strengths. He advocated fiercely against government and other barriers to found what is now known as McMaster Children's Hospital in 1988. Soon after, he also established Hamilton's Ronald McDonald House to support the families of sick children at the hospital. He has been Vice-President of Medicine for Chedoke McMaster Hospitals, Director of Research for Hamilton Health Sciences from 1990 to 1997, and Associate Dean of Clinical Services for the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University from 2002 to 2012.

Throughout this career, he remained a dedicated, caring clinician, looking after children and teenagers with immune deficiencies and rheumatic diseases before retiring in 2017. He developed a pediatric rheumatology list-serve in 2001, which is still facilitating pediatric rheumatologists from around the world to share challenging cases, resources and experiences. He served as chair of the section of Pediatric Rheumatology of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) and on the sub-board of Rheumatology of the American Board of Pediatrics. In 2004, he received the James T. Cassidy Award for excellence in teaching and care and became a Master of the ACR. For his many achievements, he was invested to the Order of Canada in 2017.

As the founder of pediatric rheumatology at McMaster, mentorship was exceptionally important to him. He was always able to find time to guide us, and many others before us, through challenges during our professional lives. Thoughtful words of wisdom were expressed with clarity and deep understanding. He was unfailingly supportive of any initiative that we proposed to expand the clinical and research pro-



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grams in pediatric rheumatology. He gave the best advice and had a knack for asking exactly the right questions to expand our thought process.

On a personal note, Peter was a remarkably kind, thoughtful, and wise leader and friend. Conversations with Peter were never dull, whether they covered personal, professional or world matters. He would often pop into our offices to share a story, to check on us if we were going through a difficult time, or to congratulate us on an accomplishment. We will forever miss his passion for medicine, his compassion for people, his warm smile, his big hugs, his

surprisingly mischievous sense of humour, and everything that made him such an inspiration. We hope to follow his example and make him proud that he left this ship in our hands.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Diane, his three daughters, Jennifer, Ashley and Rebecca, his family, and his friends during this difficult time.

In celebration of the deep impact of the work of Dr. Peter Dent in the areas of education, research and clinical practice, a collaborative fund is being created at McMaster University and Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation. The funds will be used to honour the legacy of Dr. Peter Dent, as guided by the Dent family, the Department of Pediatrics and the McMaster Children's Hospital. For more information, please visit www.hamiltonhealth.ca/dent.

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