

Tribute to Dr. Tom Hunter

By Barry Koehler, MD, FRCPC

Thomas Hunter (1943-2022) died on January 11, 2022. A lifelong bachelor, Tom is survived by his brother Alec, Alec's wife, Trish, and niece Linsey, all of Newtonhill, Scotland.

Tom was born in Scotland. He graduated from Charing Cross Hospital, University of London in 1967. He completed his residency training at the University of Toronto, as well as a year at the National Spinal Injury Unit, Stoke-Mandeville Hospital. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in Internal Medicine in 1973 and in Rheumatology in 1974.

After completing his training, he joined the Division of Rheumatology at the University of Manitoba. He was appointed Director of the Rheumatic Diseases Unit in 1982. His particular research interest was in ankylosing spondylitis. He moved to the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 1986, where he continued to pursue his interests in research, clinical care and teaching. During this time, he acted as an Examiner in Rheumatology for the Royal College (1994-1997). In Manitoba, he established, with Dr. Ross Petty, a clinic to facilitate the transition of patients moving from pediatric to adult care for their arthritis. Upon his move to Vancouver, he and Ross established a similar clinic.

Tom retired from his medical career in 1997, returning to Scotland to be the caregiver for his aging parents. Never one to remain idle nor to be completely removed from medicine, he enrolled in the University of Edinburgh and completed his MBA in 1998, his dissertation topic being "An Analysis of the Procedures used by Hospital Managers in the National Health Service to Manage the Complaints of Patients." He also started — and completed — a novel of detective fiction. His frustration was the failure to find a publisher.

Following his parents' deaths, he elected to return to Vancouver in 2013, with plans to continue his writing career. He completed the Simon Fraser programme in Creative Writing in 2015 and was well into the drafting of his second novel. Unfortunately, Mother Nature threw him a curve, with the development of a gastro-oesophageal junction malignancy in the summer of 2016. Despite chemotherapy and resective surgery, the tumour spread continued over the ensuing years. Fatigue markedly curtailed his writing. Despite this, he accomplished another of his ambitions, visiting China. He did so in 2018 as a member of the UBC Division of Rheumatology yearly teaching programme in rheumatology for medical students at



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Zhongshan School of Medicine, Sun Yat-sen University, along with his colleagues, Simon Huang and Ian Tsang. Despite Tom's devotion to a truly English diet, he adapted to, and enjoyed, both the different culture and its cuisine.

Tom is remembered by his colleagues for his strong ethical sense and for his commitment to his patients. His life led him along branching pathways which he trod with persistence and with a twinkle in his eye.

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