

MEDICAL ASSOCIATES

NORTH BURNABY

(a History)

Medical Associates, North Burnaby had it's origin in February 1946 when I, Dr.Gerald L.Smith opened an office for the practice of Medicine and Surgery at 3915 E. Hastings Street, North Burnaby, B.C.

Dr.John F.Arthur joined me in July 1946 in a Medical partnership. We had been roommates for a brief period in 1935 while at Medical College in Winnipeg and had met again in Vancouver during December 1940 when I examined him at a Recruiting Centre for entry as a Service Medical Officer. We had been in touch frequently during the War years when we were Service Medical Officers in the R.C.A.F..

At this time in the partnership, we had a C.P.R. contract to attend employees in the area from Renfrew in the west to Barnet in the east and from the inlet in the north to the railway track traversing central Burnaby in the south. For this area we received the grand sum of \$50.00 per month, plus four rail passes per year to anywhere in Canada. Dr.Arthur had an arrangement to carry out three V.D. Clinics a week, each requiring most of a morning. I was Medical Director of the B.C. Government Employees Medical Service, a position I held for ~~ten~~ years until the Head Office was moved to Victoria. This position required a half day per week plus a substantial amount of telephone work.

These three contracts provided for the basic office overhead which at that time for two practitioners was in the range of \$250.00 per month.

If one wonders why we retained these jobs for some years the reasons were:

1) Although we were kept relatively busy, collections were very slow with ever-increasing Accounts Receivable.

2) There was minimal prepaid medical care...about 10% of our patients had M.S.A. which paid 75% of the minimum fee.

3) Social Assistance and Old Age Pension recipients accounts were paid at about 50% of the minimum fee. At that time the Home calls tariff was \$3.00, Office visits \$2.50, Night calls \$5.00, and W.C.B. subsequent visits \$1.50.

In 1949 we persuaded Dr.W.Lovegrove to join our partnership at 3915 E. Hastings Street. Bill had an office on Renfrew at 22nd Avenue and continued to use it on a part time basis for several months.

We soon worked out a schedule of each of us working four days per week. This schedule left each of us two afternoons to attend to routine home visits and calls and catch up on paperwork. At that time there were 17 prepaid Medical Plans, each one had different forms many with catch questions in an effort to avoid paying the bill. Many patients, unwittingly or not, felt absolved of all payment responsibilities once they had

paid a premium, hence often long delays in payment, if received at all, plus time consuming letters in attempts to justify claims.

In the early 50's the College of Physicians and Surgeons instituted certain criteria for approval of Medical Insurance plans, and four or five plans qualified. The remaining fly by night outlets folded leaving many unpaid claims never to be heard from again.

During 1946-1952, prior to the opening of the Burnaby General Hospital, hospital beds were very tight and many patients with Congestive Heart Failure, Pneumonia, Rheumatic Fever and assorted medical problems were looked after at home, necessitating many repeat home visits. The V.O.N. were of great help at these times. During Influenza epidemics it was not unusual for each of us to have 6 to 9 home calls to do in an evening.

Obstetrics became a large part of our practice during the late 40's and early 50's, the era of the Baby Boom. During that period it was usual for the three of us, John, Bill and I to deliver 250 babies per year. John, who had an interest and special skills in Obstetrics, delivered the most maternities. Bill was more inclined to the Medical side, whereas my interest was Surgical so we had a pleasant trio, with never any conflicts that I can recall, and a busy but pleasant and relatively financially rewarding practice.

In retrospect those were probably some of most pleasant years in practice. We worked long hours, maybe 60 per week. We had young families, devoted and helpful wives and some time for relaxation.

In 1950 we hired a full time laboratory technician and although our space was very restricted, we found the technician a great aid both for us and for patients as the closest lab facility otherwise, was in central Vancouver or one of the hospitals.

During this time an interesting event occurred. Bill and I worked Saturdays in the office and it was not uncommon for Bill to produce a bottle of wine at the conclusion of the office work. Bill finally mentioned that Mr. "Z" usually brought him a bottle of wine when he came for an office visit and he found Saturday was a good day to be so rewarded.

In 1951 I decided to attempt to complete my surgical specialty toward which I already had two years, in 1938-40, prior to enlisting in the R.C.A.M.C. The Royal College required me to take a further 18 months in training and approved 1 year as Associate Resident in Surgery at Shaughnessy Hospital and 6 months as a Resident in Pathology at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. I passed the certificate examination in 1953 and thereby became the first specialist in Burnaby.

At this time, 1951, we had purchased a lot on Hastings Street, now 4027, through our holding company, Norburn Holdings Ltd.. We planned and had built the first part of the building

currently occupied by Medical Associates. The first section was on a 33 foot lot, with two stories front and back with a clerestory between.

Dr. Carmen Johnson took my practice while I was off on Post Graduate training in 1952 and remained with the group for 5 years, during which time he was an active and dedicated member of our group

Following my return to practice in 1954, Dr. John Arthur did a 6 month refresher in Gynecology and Obstetrics at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. John brought back some new and interesting techniques which he shared with all.

The following year Dr. Bill Lovegrove spent a fruitful 6 months at a course in Internal Medicine at Hammersmith Hospital, London, England. Bill had many pearls of wisdom to add to our supply.

Dr. Johnson after 5 exhausting years in the group and still a bachelor, did a year in research at Shrewsbury. While there he met and married Gwen M.D. and left to practice in West Vancouver, where he built up a large practice and raised four children.

It should be noted that members of the group away on study leave received 6 months at regular salary, the organization at that time being a partnership, all with equal percentages.

As far as I know, Dr. Johnson was the last benefactor in our P.G. program. However any member of the partnership who left received a substantial stipend commensurate with his term of

service. Most new members of the partnership came in on salary basis for 1 year, following which they became percentage partners.

This method persisted until 1965 when we introduced a basic salary plus an incentive factor adjusted every 3 months according to the gross billings of each member. Some may have been underpaid and some overpaid under the scheme but basically it worked satisfactorily and an amicable relationship prevailed.

Dr. Ron Ellis joined us in 1955 while Dr. Arthur was away on Post graduate study and remained for about 1 year. He left to practice with friends in Vegreville, Alberta and subsequently became an internist in Kelowna.

Dr. Bruce Young replaced Dr. Ellis and proved to be an excellent addition. He remained with the group for 5 years and left to study Radiology and was subsequently a member of the H. Brooke Radiology Group.

As mentioned earlier, Accounts Receivable were a major problem during practice in the late 40's and early 50's. It was in 1954 with Accounts Receivable of over \$50,000.00 many of them untraceable, that we employed Mr. Andy Gillespie as our Business Manager. Andy was a credit expert and rapidly brought the business side of our practice into line. At that time we had four doctors in the office, one full and one part time nurse, two nurses aids, two receptionists and one laboratory technician.

Dr. Harry Zimmerman joined Medical Associates in 1956 and rapidly developed a large practice. Harry remained one of the stalwarts of the group and was the senior member at the time of his retirement in October 1988.

Dr. Ken Kirkwood joined the group in 1958 and proved to be a most valued member. Ken was especially well equipped in Pharmacologically and was our reference in matters of emotional disorder. His care of the elderly was especially commendable.

In 1959 we expanded our premises by buying, through our holding company, the lot and building immediately adjacent on the east side of 4027. We built a 7 room addition on the northern half of the lot, connected to 4027 with the existing crosswalk. This left an active business on the front half of the lot. We later demolished that commercial building and built the present south part of the office including the Pharmacy space and offices above in 1964.

This addition completed the office space as it now exists. However, many small changes have been carried out to improve utilization and convenience and the office has been maintained at a remarkably good level.

Dr. R.C. Jones, certified in the specialty of General Surgery, joined the group in April 1964 and thereafter shared surgical duties with me. Dr. Jones was also well qualified in General Practice and each member of the group took their share of night and weekend calls.

Dr. Jack Fitton started practice at 4027 in August 1965. He had extra training in General Medicine at Flint, Michigan and quickly became a valued member of the group. He remained until August 1991. He carried a large and dedicated patient load.

Dr. T.S. Hourigan joined Medical Associates in July 1968 and added a new dimension with his expertise in allergy testing and treatment. Dr. Hourigan, shared with Dr. Lovegrove the office interpretation of ECG's a valued feature, along with his interest in Internal Medicine.

During the period between 1960 and 1965 we had a number of short term assistants. Some trying out group practice, some earning a few bucks preparatory to going in to Post Graduate work. Some of these were Dr. Clayt Davis, who subsequently became an Ophthalmologist in Ontario. Dr. Paul vanUchelen who left to practice in the U.S.A. and Dr. Bob Thompson, who qualified in Plastic Surgery and has a very successful Vancouver practice in the specialty.

Mrs. Nora Whitlock began work with us at 3915 E. Hastings in January 1952 and was an essential member of our organization until her retirement in May 1975. Mrs. Whitlock had a phenomenal memory and a special talent with people as well as an excellent medical sense. She did all allergy injections and supervised all nursing procedures in the office through those years.

Mr. Andy B. Gillespie retired from his position as Business Manager (Administrator) in 1974 after 20 years of meritorious service. His expertise in medical office administration was recognized by the B.C. Medical Association and he became their

first consultant in Medical Office Administration. Andy travelled the province assisting physicians to update their administrative patterns and efficiency for 8 years, during part of which period he was President of the Association of Clinic Managers. Mr. Gillespies' position was assumed by Mrs. Pat Forrester who continued the pattern of progressively improving the administrative details in the office and assisting the doctors in business decisions.

I, Dr. Gerald L. Smith retired from active practice in July 1971 after 25 years in the organization of Medical Associates, having seen the practice grow from a sol practitioner working in a two room office with a shared receptionist to an eight doctor group with full time Business Manager, Registered Nurses, Laboratory Technicians, experienced and competent receptionists and a helpful supporting staff.

Dr. John F. Arthur retired from practice due to ill health in 1972. As previously noted, John had been my first associate and had participated fully in the growth and progress of the group.

Dr. Lovegrove, whom I had first met at Fort Rupert R.C.A.F. Station in 1944 retired from Medical Associates in 1973. Bill had seen all the changes recorded above and had been a most valued member of the group. Upon retirement Bill became a "house builder" and completed a beautiful home on his attractive Aldergrove property.

All three of the original group, upon retirement received a stipend of \$500.00 per month for 10 months. This figure had been previously agreed upon and represented the retirees share of office assets and accounts receivable.

Dr.W.E.Hardie took over the general practice position of my practice. He had special training in Pediatrics but had to convert to adult medicine as there was no medical pediatrics in my practice.

Dr.Ian Taylor assumed the practice of Dr.Arthur. Dr.Taylor had special training in Internal Medicine and Electrocardiography and fitted well in the group.

Dr.Dennis Jack assumed the practice of Dr.Lovegrove. With his extra training in General Practice with C.C.F.P. he was the first member to be so qualified.

In 1975 the financial pattern of the group changed to one of individual private practice and in 1985 the original partnership agreement was voided.

Dr.Zimmerman retired in 1988 after being with the group for 32 years. The senior member of Medical Associates at the time of his retirement, he also had the distinction of being the longest serving member of the organization and had been a premier performer both in practice and administrative matters. His practice was assumed by Dr.Henry Lew.

Dr.Kirkwood left practice in June 1988 after 30 years with Medical Associates, the youngest retiree until that date, Ken had rendered yeoman service to a varied, and often older clientele. His practice was taken by Dr.Peter J.Smith.

Dr. Fitton retired in August 1991 after 26 years with the group and left his busy practice in the care of Dr. Michael Look.

Dr. Jones who had been reducing his surgical work for some time, retired from practice in August 1991 and his General Practice was taken by Dr. Karime Mitha. Dr. Jones was with Medical Associates for 27 years of careful and kind service.

As I look back 47 years to the day our office was first opened, I can take credit only for having planted the seed. The growth and success of Medical Associates, as a viable progressive group giving quality medical care, belongs to the doctors and their staff who over the years have worked at 4027 Hastings Street.

My thanks to Dr. Harry Zimmerman and Mrs. Pat Forrester for looking up dates and events that had avoided my memory.

Dr. Gerald L. Smith

March 1993