

Department Head Blog

December 1st, 2020

Over the summer and into the fall, we had adjusted to the new “COVID-normal”. Although things were different, we were able to maintain some social contacts; our kids were back to school and their recreational activities. It was different but it was something. The bursting of the Atlantic Bubble is a stark reminder that the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is officially upon us. As more stringent Public Health measures are announced, many of us feel an underlying sense of dread. Personal bubbles shrink and we wonder “can I do this again?” and for how much longer. It has been a particular difficult time for those with family outside of the Maritimes, in many cases, family that has not been seen since the start of the pandemic. It is important that we recognize this and offer our support to each other. The second wave of the pandemic is proving problematic with multiple staff exposures across various departments. At work, we are reminded that our greatest risk is from staff-to-staff exposure. It is important to stress the importance of Public health measures at work – wearing a medical mask and maintaining social distancing when possible.

In the Fall of 2019, we started the renewal process for the Dalhousie Department of Emergency Medicine strategic plan under the guidance of **Dr. Doug Sinclair**. Key to this process was the overarching principal that the DEM was a Maritime based department and the idea that collectively, the department was greater than the sum of its parts. Planning sessions to hear from key stakeholders were held in Halifax and for the first time, in Saint John. I hope that you will join me this Friday, December 4th from 9:30-11:00 as we unveil the new Department logo and launch the Dalhousie Department of Emergency Medicine Strategic Plan for the next 5 years.

Despite the pressures of COVID-19, members of the Department continue to shine. It gives me great pleasure to share with you some of their recent accomplishments and accolades. Nationally, **Dr. George Kovacs** was announced as the **CAEP's President Award winner**. Recognized for his sustained record of research, education and innovation in airway management, he has advanced the practice of the specialty of Emergency Medicine nationally and internationally. I was particularly moved by George's closing remarks during his acceptance speech: “But always remember the privilege of making a difference for all types of patients, whether you cannulate them, intubate them or just listen to their story.”

When I look at the faces of this year's CAEP award winners, I am struck by how close knit the specialty of Emergency Medicine is within Canada. Having trained in Canada and been involved in the academic scene throughout my entire career, I personally know most of those who are so deservedly recognized every year. To see **Dr. David Lewis** break into this tight circle by being awarded the **CAEP Emergency Physician of the Year – Urban** is particularly impressive given his relatively late arrival to Canada. Since joining the Department as a staff Emergency Physician at the Saint John Regional Hospital in 2013, David has continued to build on his already impressive academic credentials. He is a high achieving exemplary member of the Dalhousie Department of Emergency Medicine. He has been a transformative leader at the Clinical/Academic Department in Saint John. Not one to self-grandiose, he quietly provides high-caliber, quality work with a consistent professional approach. He is a valuable role-model and mentor to both his students and his colleagues.

Sean Tead, a Critical Care Paramedic at the QEII HSC ED and the Provincial Paramedic Educator for the NSH, was awarded a **Governor General's Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Award**. The award “recognizes professionals in the provision of pre-hospital emergency medical services to the

public, who have performed their duties in an exemplary manner, characterized by good conduct, industry and efficiency.” Recipients must have “completed 20 years of exemplary service, including at least 10 years in the performance of duties involving potential risk.” Ever humble in his accomplishments, Sean stated “It came as a bit of a surprise to me to be nominated.”

With more letters after his name than in the alphabet, **Dr. Ron Stewart** is no stranger to recognition. Cited as a “Grandfather to Emergency Medicine”, Ron was recently honoured with an **Honourary Lifetime Membership Award** from the **Trauma Association of Canada**, for his past and continuing leadership in improving trauma care locally, nationally, internationally and globally. The award is given to a person who has made significant contributions to improve the lives of trauma patients and is deserving of recognition as determined by a unanimous resolution of the Board of Directors.

One of my mentors once told me “the third time pays for all.” Proving that perseverance does indeed pay off, **Dr. Michael Young**, a senior and much valued member of the Department, recently defended his thesis “Nova Scotia 811 Telephone Triage and Lower Acuity Pediatric Emergency Department Visits at the IWK” successfully completing his Masters in Community Health and Epidemiology. Congratulations, Mike!

CaRMS interviews are one of the most important events of the year for our Department. It is a time to not only assess perspective candidates for our residency programs but for us to showcase the benefits of training at Dalhousie. The CCFP(EM) residency program at the QEII HSC just concluded 2 days of CaRMS interviews for 29 candidates. This included two lunchtime virtual sessions and an evening virtual social session that included multiple break-out rooms. Feedback from attendees was excellent and the high quality of our program was quite evident! Thank you to all staff and residents that participated and a special thanks to **Drs. Ryan Henneberry, Stephanie Fong** and **Ms. Jennifer Day**.

Department members continue to be active with publications. **Dr. Jolene Cook** was an author on the CAEP Position Statement: Emergency department management of people with opioid use disorder in CJEM. **Dr. Kirstin Weerdenburg** published Point-of-care lung ultrasound imaging in pediatric COVID-19 the Ultrasound Journal.

The Emergency Department at Horizon Health Network in Saint John has posted the position of Director of Quality Improvement, Emergency Medicine. I would encourage interested faculty to check out the posting and to share through your social media and networks.

The sixth annual **Dalhousie Census ‘Be Counted’ campaign** will launch on Monday, November 30 – December 7. The census is open to all faculty, staff and students, and I encourage you to please complete it. The census is available any time to complete through the dal.ca/BeCounted website. Completing the census is confidential. Last year’s census had many new questions so if you completed the census prior to 2019 we ask that you complete it again to help ensure the university data is accurate. A census is vital for Dal to make informed decisions on programs, supports and services that are inclusive to all, which impact everyone who works and studies here.

As always, if you have any comments, suggestions or news you would like me to share, I can be reached at emergency.medicine@dal.ca.

Cheers, Kirk