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Northern Passages

Newsletter of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine

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A focus on communities

"It takes more than one village to build a medical school and these villages are spread all over the North."

- Dr. Dan Hunt, Vice Dean

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Prospective charter class students reflect the diversity of Northern Ontario



Founding Dean Dr. Roger Strasser and Dr. Jill Konkin, Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs pass 56 offers of admission to Canada Post Mail Carrier Joan Stevens. The letters were sent express post on May 31.

The offers of admission have been sent, and prospective students are weighing their options. Some, perhaps many, of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine's preferred candidates have also been accepted at other medical schools across the province. Should they become members of the first class to attend the first new medical school in Canada in more than thirty years? Or will they opt for another medical school?

It appears that the pioneering spirit is alive and well in NOSM's charter class, and Dr. Jill Konkin, Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs, is elated with the level of acceptances received thus far. "We are extremely pleased to find that as of June 16th, 76% of the students who received an offer have accepted. This is a strong signal that the innovative approach to medical education taken by the School of Medicine is in keeping with what future physicians want."

The School aims to have a class that reflects the cultural diversity of Northern Ontario. Physicians who understand the social fabric of the North are more likely to live and work in Northern communities following their MD training. "The fact that the majority of applicants are from Northern communities is encouraging, and gives us all reason to celebrate being part of a network of communities filled with talent," noted Dr. Konkin.

Of the 56 students who were offered a coveted spot in the School's 56 seats: 50% had lived ten years or more in rural or remote communities, 41% had lived 10 years or more in Northern urban communities, 17.8% were Francophone, 17% were bilingual, 12.5% were Aboriginal, and 7% were from out of the Province. These statistics will fluctuate in the coming weeks when the second round of letters are sent to students on the waiting list in order to fill any remaining vacant seats.



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Northern Ontario School of Medicine

School cements partnership with Sault Ste. Marie

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) and the Sault Area Hospital have joined forces in the training of medical students in Northern Ontario. The partnership was made official in May during the signing of an affiliation agreement and the formalization of a commitment to house a Medical School staff person within the Sault Area Hospital.

The affiliation agreement outlines the collaborative relationship between the two institutions. The Agreement will provide NOSM students with hands-on clinical and practical experience outside the classroom, strengthen respective research efforts, provide an opportunity to augment library and information services, and assist each institution in supporting each other's efforts in order to achieve and maintain excellence in teaching.

Dr. Roger Strasser, Founding Dean of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine noted that this was a very exciting moment for the School. "The School of Medicine exists to serve all communities across Northern Ontario. Partnerships such as these are absolutely fundamental to our ability to succeed as a truly distributed medical school."

Jerome Quenneville, President and CEO of the Sault Area Hospital, noted that the establishment of Medical School staff personnel within the hospital will further strengthen the role of Sault area communities within the School of Medicine.

fruition within our community. I am extremely proud of our physicians who have stepped forward in an unprecedented fashion to help turn this partnership into a reality."



Dr. Patricia Zehr, Mayor John Rowswell, Mr. David Oraziotti and Mr. Jerome Quenneville look on while Dr. Roger Strasser signs the Sault Area Hospital affiliation agreement with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

David Oraziotti, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie noted that the Northern Ontario School of Medicine is an important piece of the puzzle which will help to solve the physician shortage for so many Northerners. "With more than one million people in Ontario not having a family physician, this partnership is a step in the right direction. The more future physicians are trained in the North, the more likely they will choose to stay here when they graduate."

Dr. Patricia Zehr, President, Algoma West Academy of

"The physical presence of the School of Medicine in our hospital is an important reminder that this partnership is a positive investment in the future of health care services for Sault area residents."

Mayor John Rowswell expressed his gratitude to the School of Medicine for partnering with the community of Sault Ste. Marie. "It is absolutely thrilling to see the School of Medicine come to

Medicine and David Murray, CEO of the Group Health Association reaffirmed the commitment of Sault Ste. Marie physicians to the School of Medicine. Dr. Zehr noted that, "This is an excellent opportunity to expose NOSM students to our renowned model of health care. Our unique circumstances in the Sault will be advantageous for both clinical teaching and community based research."



Dr. Kelly takes full advantage of the outdoor recreation activities Sioux Lookout has to offer.

Clinical faculty profile: Dr. Len Kelly

Dr. Kelly is an Associate Professor – Family Medicine in the Division of Clinical Sciences at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, who lives and works in Sioux Lookout! He first came to Sioux Lookout in 1986 as a medical student, so he knows firsthand the recruitment value of medical training in beautiful rural areas like Northwest Ontario.

Dr. Kelly has a full-scope practice including obstetrics, emergency, inpatients, palliative care, and home visits. He is a community physician for the regional chemotherapy program, and is involved with operative orthopedics and caesarian sections.

Dr. Kelly also has a keen interest in research and occasionally lectures at national conferences on diabetes and orthopedics. He works in a group practice with 6 great colleagues, and faces a continual balancing act to expand non-work activities. Dr. Kelly has an 11 year old son Emmanuel, and recently wed Dr. Sharen Madden, a fellow Sioux Lookout physician on May 14th, 2005!

Franco-Ontarian community supportive of School's consultative symposium

On May 13 and 14, over one hundred and sixty delegates from across Northern Ontario attended the School of Medicine's Symposium, *Francophones and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine*, in Sudbury. Deemed a huge success by both delegates and the Medical School, one of the main objectives of the Symposium was to gather a wide range of comments, suggestions and feedback on how the School can best engage the Francophones of Northern Ontario into its development.

"There is no doubt about it, we achieved our objectives," noted Nicole Ranger, President of the School's Francophone Reference Group. "Delegates were forthcoming with their comments and suggestions, and the stage is now set for the coming months where the Group will work towards developing a plan of action to assist the Medical School in further developing its partnership with the Francophone community."

The Francophone Reference Group of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine was established in 2003 to liaise with Northern Franco-Ontarian communities to help identify and respond to their needs in the development of the School. The Group consists of various Francophone community members and meets regularly.

Dr. Roger Strasser, Founding Dean of the School of Medicine, echoed Madame Ranger's comments. "This Symposium was an important milestone in the School's development – it was the opportunity for all Northern Ontarians to learn more about the School, and to have input into its Francophone initiatives. Anytime we can engage the community into the School's development, the end result is better. The enthusiastic response from the Francophone community was simply fabulous."

The Honorable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Culture and Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, opened the Symposium with comments on Francophone services in the health sector. Following presentations from

leading academics, delegates divided into small group discussions to provide their input and suggestions on how the Francophone Reference Group can best serve its role of assisting the Medical School in responding to the needs of the Francophone community.

A Symposium report, which will document the input received at the Symposium and outline specific recommendations is now being written. It is expected to be produced within a few months.



Ontario Minister of Culture and Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs Madeleine Meilleur addresses guests in Sudbury during the Francophones and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine symposium.

Mai 13 et 14, plus de cent soixante délégués de tout le Nord de l'Ontario ont assisté au symposium de l'école de médecine, Les Francophones et l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario, qui a eu lieu à Sudbury. Un des principaux objectifs de cette manifestation, qui de l'avis des délégués et de l'école de médecine fut un immense succès, était de recueillir une vaste gamme de commentaires et de suggestions sur la façon dont l'école pourrait au mieux faire participer les Francophones du Nord de l'Ontario à son développement.

Selon Nicole Ranger, présidente du Groupe témoin francophone de l'école, « nous avons indubitablement atteint notre objectif cette fin de semaine. Les délégués ont volontiers formulé leurs commentaires et suggestions et ont ainsi posé les jalons du plan d'action que le groupe élaborera dans les prochains mois afin d'aider l'école de médecine à intensifier son partenariat avec la communauté francophone ».

Le Groupe témoin francophone de l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario a été créé en 2003 afin d'assurer la liaison avec la communauté francophone du Nord de la province, d'aider à recenser ses besoins et à y répondre au fil de la mise sur pied de l'école. Le groupe comprend divers membres de la communauté francophone et se réunit régulièrement.

Le Dr Roger Strasser, doyen fondateur de l'école de médecine, s'est fait l'écho de Madame Ranger : « ce symposium a constitué une étape importante de l'établissement de l'école. Tous les Ontariens du Nord ont eu l'occasion de se renseigner sur l'école et de donner leurs points de vue sur les initiatives francophones. Chaque fois que nous sollicitons l'intervention de la communauté dans l'établissement de l'école, le résultat final est remarquable. La réponse enthousiaste de la communauté francophone était simplement fabuleuse ».

L'honorable Madeleine Meilleur, ministre de la Culture et ministre responsable des Affaires francophones, a inauguré le symposium avec des commentaires sur les services aux Francophones dans le secteur de la santé. Après les présentations de chefs de files universitaires, les délégués se sont répartis en petits groupes afin d'exprimer leurs opinions et suggestions sur la façon dont le Groupe francophone témoin peut aider au mieux l'école de médecine à répondre aux besoins de la communauté qu'il représente.

Le compte rendu du symposium qui recensera les idées recueillies et mettra en évidence des recommandations particulières est en préparation et devrait être prêt dans quelques mois.

NOSM strives to instill respect for all cultures and spiritual beliefs

Terminally ill patients have long been encouraged to embrace their personal philosophies during the late stages of life to help attenuate their fears of death and dying.

Now there is mounting evidence to indicate that a patient's spiritual beliefs can affect health and recovery throughout the life cycle. Part of a physician's role in treating a patient is to transcend technical skills and stimulate thoughts of spirituality that may be beneficial to the patient at any stage of life.

"In a region as diverse as Northern Ontario, it is important that the concept of spiritual awareness and sensitivity is weaved throughout the NOSM curriculum."

-Dr. Dan Hunt

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine will provide students with opportunities that will encourage open-mindedness and embed spiritual consideration in the physicians of tomorrow. Community placements expose

students to a variety of cultures and beliefs that may be foreign and challenging to many of them. "Students can observe and participate in activities that are a part of a community's way of life. They learn to accept others' beliefs, regardless of their own convictions," says Dr. Dan Hunt, Vice Dean. "In this capacity, students are subtly trained to disregard any personal conflicts that may occur within themselves. They understand that their role is not to be judgmental or to contaminate a person's beliefs," Hunt explains.

Students will summarize their community placement experiences and make presentations to fellow students. Each student will reflect on how it would be to practice as a physician in that community. "In essence, the students are their own research subjects," says Hunt. "They make observations about the community's activities, people and culture and determine how they would best serve that community. Those observations and considerations will most definitely include philosophical beliefs."

Many medical schools in Northern America offer

courses such as prayer and healative power as electives. The Northern Ontario School of Medicine will instead weave the concept of spiritual awareness and sensitivity throughout its curriculum.

"In a region as diverse as Northern Ontario,



Vice Dean Dr. Dan Hunt was involved with the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Aboriginal communities placement pilot

it is important that this model becomes an expectation of NOSM students and not just a lecture topic," Dr. Hunt concludes.

NOSM prof studying links between nutrition and mental health

Can a person's breath provide clues as to overall health and even serve as an early detector of certain cancers? Those are just two of the intriguing questions currently under study by Dr. Brian Ross, NOSM's Professor of Pharmacology.

A graduate of the University of Glasgow with degrees in Biochemistry and Molecular Pharmacology, Dr. Ross has conducted extensive studies into how nutrition alters brain functions in health and disease – finding dietary links to depression and childhood attentional deficits. Next the NOSM professor aims to examine how dietary supplementation can alter mood and behaviour, and why some people appear to be more prone to dietary insufficiencies than others. Dr. Ross hopes to use his research to help develop non-invasive health screening tests

using volatile compounds present in human breath. He has already investigated various marker chemicals which can give information about a person's nutritional status.



Dr. Brian Ross, Professor of Pharmacology

If his work is successful, Dr. Ross then plans to

study whether breath analysis can be used to aid the early detection of cancers, in particular lung cancer, and how volatile chemical measurements can assist with reducing environmental pollution and workplace health and safety.

Before coming to NOSM Dr. Ross worked as a Fellow at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, an Assistant Professor in Psychiatry and Medical Sciences at the University of Toronto, and as a Senior Researcher and Administrator at the University of the Highlands and Islands, a new distributed education institute located in rural Scotland. He has also managed a start-up biotechnology company focused on health diagnostics. Dr. Ross moved with his family to work at the School's Thunder Bay campus last August.

Teaching strategies for the busy clinician

Preparation: The key to efficient clinical learning

The teacher-student relationship evokes notions of wisdom, transitions, and of mutual growth. It is a time-honoured relationship within our culture. It is also challenging work. For the mentor, teaching can rekindle the excitement of medicine, and may even help prevent professional burn-out. For the student, the relationship can be nothing less than life-changing, opening new doors of possibility and gently closing others.

Teaching medical students in a busy clinical environment can be difficult. But small investments of time, and careful preparation, will result in a rewarding experience for both teacher and student. The first thing Clinical Teachers should do is to familiarize themselves with the objectives and the expectations for the placement. A quick review should be sufficient to direct the student toward appropriate patients and learning resources.

With the instructor well prepared, the next step is to arrange the general clinic environment. Students need to learn about the overall workings of the clinic. Interactions with nurses, the office manager, receptionists and other members of the clinic staff can provide educational opportunities for the student. It is important that staff are informed and understand the role of the student.

Patients are a critical aspect of the learning environment, so it is important they be part of the educational team. They need to be fully informed that students will be participating in



their care. Some clinics have frequent students, so patients will likely be comfortable with the situation. For those clinics that take students intermittently, special effort should be made to inform the patients. This can be done by the receptionist and/or the person registering the patient. A large friendly sign at the reception desk is a good idea as well.

Patients should be informed that their physician and their practice have been selected to participate in the Medical School's educational program, which lends a measure of prestige to the clinical faculty. Should they wish, patients can opt to be seen by the Clinical Teacher alone.

The final piece of this educational puzzle is the students themselves. It is important that students are comfortable with their surroundings, and that they understand the Teacher's expectations from the beginning.

Teachers need to show them around the clinic and introduce them to people. Once the students are settled in provide them with a brief overview of your expectations, and revisit these as the students progress. Provide constructive feedback as immediately as possible, but establish regular daily points where students can receive comments.

A good approach with new students is to initially observe them with patients. Repeat appropriate portions of historical and physical examination as a form of modelling. Once the student is comfortable with the established process, and you are comfortable with the student, allow them to make the first contact with the patient in your absence.

It is important medical students gain an understanding of the inter-professional approach to health care. Provide opportunities for students to interact with other health care providers. Nurses, nurse practitioners, midwives and other allied health professionals will have interesting cases to share. Student interactions with other professionals will broaden their learning environment, and will help the primary Clinical Teacher share some of the teaching load.

In the end the Clinical Teacher is fundamentally a role model. Clinical Teachers need to be respectful towards students and colleagues. While enthusiasm and dependability are highly valued, sometimes what students really need is a mentor with a good sense of humour and a general sense of empathy.



Staff of the East campus of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine participated in the Big Bike for Stroke Event on May 25 in Sudbury. The team raised approximately \$1,475.00 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

The School's West campus staff will participate in the Thunder Bay Dragon Boat Festival in July, which raises funds for the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Catholic Family Development Centre and the St. Joseph's Foundation.

Wanted: A few good hosts

Curriculum planners at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine are on the road this summer, searching for a few good hosts – communities, that is - to provide a critical piece of the School's new curriculum: the Comprehensive Community Clerkship.

Lasting the majority of third year (30 weeks), the Comprehensive Community Clerkship, or CCC, will allow NOSM students to live and learn in communities at some distance from the School's two main campuses in Thunder Bay and Sudbury. To date, NOSM planners have identified ten communities – Sioux Lookout, Timmins, Parry Sound, the Temiskaming Shores, Huntsville, Bracebridge, Fort Frances, Kenora, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie – as potential hosts for the School's third year students, who will begin their Clerkships in the fall of 2007.

Termed "large rural or small urban" the ten communities afford the ideal blend of hospital facilities, access to specialists, and social amenities for third year NOSM students, according to Dr. Tim Zmijowskyj, Head of the School's Clinical Sciences Division. "This doesn't mean that other Northern communities will be left out of the Clerkship process," Zmijowskyj stresses, "only that these ten are the first wave of an ongoing process." As a result, Dr. Zmijowskyj and other NOSM staff spent a good part of the early summer of 2005 reaching out to the northern communities.

Each of the ten communities was visited by NOSM staff, who held private group meetings with family physicians, specialists and other health care professionals in the area. Dr. Zmijowskyj and other NOSM speakers provided an overview of the School's curriculum and invited attendees to become involved as a CCC learning site. "We're hopeful that we will have a high degree of community participation," Dr. Zmijowskyj notes, "These host communities will get to showcase themselves to our students. If the experience is a positive one, there's a good chance some of the students will opt to return to these communities once they're ready to practice." Northern communities not on this spring's list may yet be invited to participate in the Year Three CCC, or in six week Clerkships as remote or rural host communities.

Further information about the Phase 2 (Year 3) community visits can be obtained by contacting Megan Messenger at (705) 662-7209 or megan.messenger@normed.ca.



This spring, Faculty from the Division of Medical Sciences had the opportunity to visit the East Campus Construction site of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine at Laurentian University. The third floor of the new building will provide 1090 sq meters of space that will house state-of-the-art research facilities and provide the infrastructure for faculty to perform world-class biomedical research that is of importance to the residents of Northern Ontario.

Apply now: Study close to home!

Our students have a passion for the North, will thrive in a small group based, distributed learning environment and have a genuine interest in improving the health of the people and communities of Northern Ontario.

Candidates must meet the following criteria:

- 4 year undergraduate degree*
- Canadian citizen or landed immigrant status
- An overall OMSAS weighted grade point average (GPA) of 3.00

*unless applying as a mature student

Applications will be accepted through the Ontario Medical School Application Service. Applications will be available in early July. Check the website at www.ouac.on.ca/omsas for information and on-line forms. All applications, transcripts and academic documents must be received by October 3, 2005. Initial screening of applicants will be based on GPA and responses to an Admissions Questionnaire. Interviews will be conducted in the spring of 2006.

Need more information? Visit our website at www.normed.ca, email your questions to nomsadmit@normed.ca, or call (807) 766-7317 or 1-888-377-7757 (from Northern Ontario only).

