In Memoriam

A Tribute to Dr. John Evans – Founder of the McMaster School of Medicine

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In this issue of the McMaster University Medical Journal we remember and pay tribute to Dr. John Evans, founder of the McMaster School of Medicine. Dr. Evans passed away at the age of 85 on February 13, 2015, after a long struggle with Parkinson’s disease.

Dr. John Evans received the Rhodes Scholarship, completed his medical degree at the University of Toronto, and specialized in internal medicine and cardiology at Oxford before being selected by McMaster University President Harry Thode to found our medical school in 1965.

In his book, Revitalizing Medical Education — McMaster Medical School The Early Years 1965-1974, author Dr. William Spaulding describes the young John Evans as dynamic and tireless; a quick-witted natural leader brimming with fresh ideas. His contemporaries have highlighted his compassion for patients, innovative ideas, and positive energy.

Dr. Evans sought to create a medical school that would emphasize the importance of primary care and family medicine, a vision that remains strongly intact today. As McMaster medical students we continue to uphold the importance of primary care and strive to establish a strong base of general medicine skills, regardless of our choice of medical specialty.

Under the leadership of Dr. Evans, the McMaster School of Medicine distinguished itself as a unique model of medical education, one that underscored innovative learning strategies, collaboration with other healthcare providers, research, and community engagement. He emphasized that “the student should emerge from medical school with the total view of the patient has a human being”, and designed a curriculum to reflect and reinforce this belief. His approach to medical education continues to be modeled by other universities worldwide.


His influence at McMaster persists to this day in the principles and structure of our medical school, as well as in the John R. Evans Chair in Health Sciences Educational Research and Instructional Development, a position currently held by Dr. Anthony Levinson, Assistant Professor in Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences.

Dr. Evans leaves behind his wife Gay, their children Derek, Mark, Michael, Gill, Tim, and Willa, and 23 grandchildren.

References

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- Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, May 19, 1967