



Mitchell agrees that the long, cold Yukon winters can be difficult for some people and depression is a common winter illness, but “cold climate [equates to] warm friends.”

The Yukon’s 33 000 residents are scattered over a huge area — 483 450 square km — that is served by 43 physicians, 36 of whom practise in Whitehorse. Mitchell, a GP who also serves as an anesthetist, vows that being a physician in the Yukon is “the best job anywhere.”

Emergency calls at the Whitehorse General Hospital, which recently underwent a \$45-million renovation, are shared by all Whitehorse doctors. “It’s a very cooperative situation,” says Mitchell, who as an anesthetist faces a heavy on-call schedule. A gynecologist, pediatrician, general surgeon, anesthetist and psychiatrist are available to provide specialist services in the Yukon.

“People get tremendous service here,” says Mitchell.

Came for a locum, staying for life

Dr. Allon Reddoch knows exactly how long he’s been in the Yukon: he came to do a locum for a pregnant doctor whose baby is now 23 years old. “I was like everyone else,” he recalls. “I came for a few months, for the sense of adventure. It took less than a month for me to know I wanted to stay.”

Reddoch, a family physician who graduated from the University of Western Ontario in 1973, says practice variety is 1 reason he enjoys his work in the North. He cited a recent 3-day period as an example. “On Monday I saw patients in my office. On Tuesday I was at the Workers’ Compensation Board — I’m their chief medical consultant and have to keep up with what’s going on in that area. I was on call Tuesday night and delivered the baby of a longtime acquaintance, which was a happy event. On Wednesday I was in the office as an allergy and dermatology consultant. We have a specialist who comes up from Vancouver part time, but I’m the local consultant for my colleagues.”

Almost every physician in the Yukon has a special area of expertise, Reddoch notes. One family physician performs ultrasonography, while other doctors are interested in areas such as cardiology and pediatrics. “We maintain our interest as well as offer special services. We all get along very, very well and refer patients to other clinics for specialized services. Patients here get excellent service.”

While attending meetings “Outside” — that’s what the rest of Canada is called by Yukoners — “people all seemed to be obsessed with finances. Here, we just don’t talk about it that much.”

Personally, says Reddoch, he and his wife, Mary,

think the Yukon is one of the most beautiful places in the country and they find lots of opportunity to pursue professional and social interests: “There is a wonderful sense of community.”

Practice in the Yukon has allowed him to develop interests that would not normally have attracted him: he has sat on the CMA Board of Directors for many years, and serves as an adviser to the Canadian Medical Protective Association. As well, the Yukon Medical Association has nominated him for the CMA presidency for 1998–99.

His outside interests have provided plenty of opportunity to travel. “I think,” says Mary Reddoch, “that we’ve seen more of Canada than we would have if we would have stayed in Ontario.”

Although not particularly involved with specific outdoor activities, the Reddochs have enjoyed hiking, sailing and cross-country skiing, and have a cabin outside Whitehorse.

Reddoch reflects that even though physicians in the Yukon are very busy, there is little opportunity for new physicians to move to the territory. “We really can’t

encourage people to come up here to practise [because of] the Physician Resource Plan.” The plan, he notes, is a reflection of what is happening elsewhere in Canada.

The current problem, Reddoch says, is finding physicians to serve as locums. Usually doctors come from BC or Alberta for brief stints, but last year Reddoch had to go as far afield as New Zealand to find someone. “Of course,” says Reddoch, “he used to live here and he was delighted to have the opportunity to come back — even for 6 weeks.”



Dr. Allon Reddoch: “a wonderful sense of community”