

Newfoundland seeks solution to MD turnover

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the turnover of international medical graduates is so severe that for every IMG who arrives in the province, another leaves. Now, a new outreach program of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association aims to keep foreign-trained physicians in the province.

Launched last fall, the IMG Preceptor Program matches incoming physicians with other physicians with similar backgrounds. A motivating factor, says NLMA Past President Ian Smith, is the simple desire to make new physicians feel more at home. "It turns out a lot of them are turned off in their first few weeks here by a wide variety of things, many of which are related to a lack of familiarity with the Canadian system," says Smith.

Bruce Squires, the NLMA's executive director, now meets every incom-

ing IMG as they prepare to practise in the province. "I spend a little bit of time talking about the association and that program, [but] I usually spend a lot more time answering questions."

Typically, there is confusion about terms and conditions of working arrangements, such as on-call hours and working hours. "When we sit down there are usually a lot of questions, particularly when it comes to call. It's such an evolving issue."

The IMGs are then advised that they will be contacted by a preceptor once they start practising. So far, more than 30 physicians in 16 communities have volunteered as preceptors.

"Some [IMGs] never had any intention of practising here long term, but a significant number arrive with no fixed plans," Smith explained. "That's a

group of physicians that we would very much like to attract to this province and keep for as long as we can."

Smith said first impressions are a potent factor. "We talked to several people who had already decided to leave and they had been here for less than 3 months."

Negative factors can include education opportunities and accommodation. "One of the things we were told was that if, for instance, you spend a hundred bucks and put some soap and towels in these places before someone shows up, it can make a huge difference. It gives you the impression that you're wanted, as opposed to just another body passing through."

Dr. Robert Young, registrar of the Newfoundland Medical Board, estimates that about 100 foreign-trained physicians arrive to practise in Newfoundland every year and the same number leave. — *John Gusbue*, St. John's



Canada has its first chair in critical care medicine

Dr. Deborah Cook, shown here with St. Joseph's Hospital CEO Allan Greve, has been appointed to fill the country's first chair in critical care medicine. The Hamilton internist was appointed to the McMaster University/St. Joseph's Hospital Regional Academic Chair in Critical Care Medicine in June. Cook, who chairs the 60-member Canadian Critical Care Trials Group, marvels that it took so long to create this type of chair in Canada. The appointment will allow her to establish an academic program in critical care medicine, with a focus on clinical interventions and ethical issues.

Eat right, live longer?

Research into the effect of single nutrients such as vitamin E on disease rates and mortality has yielded disappointing results. However, we know that the biologic effects of nutrients are interdependent and thus the health effects may depend more on a balanced and healthy diet rather than on the effect of a single component. Ashima Kant and colleagues, taking advantage of a large prospective cohort study of women presenting for breast-cancer screening, were able to follow 42 000 women (mean age 61) over a median follow-up period of almost 6 years (*JAMA* 2000;283:2109-15). Women who reported that they regularly ate more fruits, vegetables, whole-grain foods, low-fat dairy products and lean meats and poultry had lower overall mortality. Compared with women in the lowest quartile for eating healthy foods, women in the upper quartile had a relative risk for all-cause mortality of 0.69 (95% confidence interval 0.61-0.78). The authors concluded that it may be beneficial to follow recommended nutritional guidelines.