

University of Alberta: Edmonton Delight

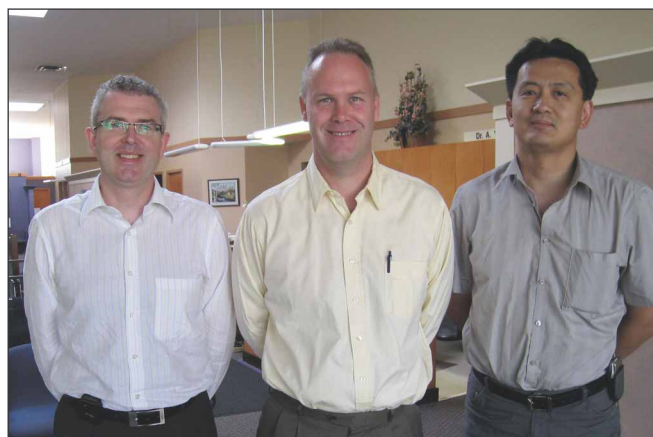
By Alexander Yan, BMSc, MD, FRCP

I have practised for almost 20 years as a community rheumatologist in Edmonton and I have seen many changes. I trained under the “three musketeers” (Dr. John Percy, Dr. Tony Russell and Dr. Paul Davis) in the days when we still had a Rheumatic Diseases Unit at the University of Alberta with a dedicated inpatient ward, as well as inpatient rheumatology beds at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital. There were no female rheumatologists at the University of Alberta in those days—how times have changed! Now the Department Head and Director of our Rheumatic Diseases Unit is Dr. Joanne Homik. Dr. Elaine Yacyshyn is the Program Director and Dr. Anna Oswald is the Coordinator of the undergraduate MSK block. It has been nice to add a feminine touch to the University rheumatology scene, although manpower issues can be a problem when the ladies are off on maternity leave (as is the case presently with Dr. Anna Oswald and Dr. Stephanie Keeling). Even Elaine has been away for

I still find clinical rheumatology to be very interesting and I am particularly pleased with all of the advances in therapeutics that have been made over the last five to 10 years!

some time recently for maternity leave and hopefully they are all training future rheumatologists in their homes!

I am in private practice with Dr. Dale Sholter and Dr. Niall Jones, and together we also run a research unit (Rheumatology Research Associates) involved primarily in CRRC trials. Dr. Sharon LeClercq and Dr. Avril Fitzgerald used to work in our building before they moved to



The three amigos in their palace (Dale, Niall and Alex).

Calgary, and Elaine was in our building but has moved to the University Hospital, making our center totally male-dominated! We have electronic medical records (EMR) and this is something that has made our offices more efficient. I certainly enjoy the freedom of private practice, in that no restrictions are placed on how or when I practice, as opposed to what happens (I’ve been told) at the University!

Most, if not all of the rheumatologists in the Edmonton area, have at least a part-time affiliation or full time affiliation with the University of Alberta. The rheumatologists in the Edmonton area have had a tradition of doing many outreach clinics in Northern/Central Alberta. Dr. Tony Russell is still quite active in practice and goes to our monthly Red Deer Clinics along with Niall Jones and Joanne Homik. Dr. Ken Skeith and Dale Sholter are backups for the Red Deer Clinic. Ken works in the Sturgeon General Hospital’s OPD as well as the Allin Clinic and doesn’t do any other peripheral clinics any more (he used to go to the Edson/Whitecourt area). Tony did a number of other peripheral clinics but Dr. Chris Lyddell has taken up practice in Grande Prairie and sees the patients there

as well as in Peace River and High Level. This gives Tony even more time to do the extensive traveling he does! Dale and Niall both do clinics in Fort McMurray, and Dale also goes every few months to Yellowknife for up to a week at a time.

Dr. Paul Davis used to be quite involved in CME activities at the University but now serves as an editor for *Clinical Rheumatology*. Dr. Walter Maksymowych is still very much involved in research—particular in the field of seronegative spondyloarthropathies, and also very busy with his growing sons who have taken up hockey and other pursuits. Dr. Steve Aaron continues to enjoy teaching in the rheumatology service at the University as well as going on travels to varied places around the world. Our pediatric needs in northern Alberta are met by Dr. Janet Ellsworth and newcomer Dr. Claire LeBlanc. Claire has a particular interest in sports medicine, as well.

Dr. Peter Chiu is currently the longest serving community rheumatologist in Edmonton and over the years he has done the most internal medicine work, including pre-operative consults at the Misericordia Hospital. He has hinted that he might wind down his practice within the next few years but hopefully not for a long time! Dr. Savi Senaratne is based out of the Grey Nuns Hospital and she works two and a half days at her office and also runs a multi-disciplinary rehabilitation program at the Glenrose Hospital for two days a week, dealing primarily with elderly patients who have rheumatology and non-rheumatology issues. Savi tells me that she is also thinking of “slowing down” but she claims she still has to work to pay for all those exotic trips she takes (she travels perhaps even more than Tony!). Dr. Sophia Khan is in solo practice in the Riverbend area of Edmonton and will probably have to help pick up the slack when Peter and Savi cut back their practices!

Dr. Rob Ferrari continues in private practice in Edmonton—often dealing with chronic pain patients. He

continues a relationship with the Rheumatic Diseases Unit and is still dealing with the controversial issues in whiplash and chronic pain with Dr. Tony Russell. Rob also wants to mention that he has learned the Argentine tango!

I still find clinical rheumatology to be very interesting and am particularly pleased with all the advances in therapeutics that have been made over the last five to 10 years! I chose to practise in Edmonton many years ago largely because of the wonderful rheumatology environment here. My mentors are my colleagues now and we

There is a shortage of rheumatologists in northern Alberta, just as there is in most of North America. The economy is wonderful in Edmonton and we welcome anyone who may be interested in moving here!

meet regularly for City-Wide Rounds in which we review interesting cases and have regular Journal Clubs. There is a shortage of rheumatologists in northern Alberta, just as there is in most of North America. The economy is wonderful in Edmonton and we welcome anyone who may be interested in moving here!

*Alexander Yan, BMSc, MD, FRCPC
Clinical Assistant Professor,
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta*