

# News from North-Western Alberta

By Christopher Lyddell, MbChB, FCP(SA)

This will, I believe, be the first regional newsletter from this area, which has its own rheumatologist in the form of Dr. Christopher Lyddell, based in Grande Prairie. Having re-located from Cape Town in South Africa, I started the service in July 2007 and have been going strong since then.

Prior to my arrival, the area was primarily served by Dr. Tony Russell from the University of Alberta, who visited on a monthly basis. Considering the size of the area, I am amazed how he managed for so many years. The service is run out of Grande Prairie and covers the area north of Whitecourt to the Northwest Territories border. In addition, we assist in providing service to north-eastern British Columbia; the total population is about 360,000 and growing!

Consultative service is provided to the area mainly from my office in Grande Prairie. An early inflammatory arthritis (EIA) clinic takes place at the hospital twice a month and a peripheral clinic is run at Peace River about 200kms further north; this peripheral clinic is mainly to assist patients from the area from Manning to High Level. Infusion services are also available in the region; most are done out of my office, the Peace River Hospital, and a private infusion service run by BioClin in Grande Prairie. For the last year I have offered ultrasound in the clinic and a portable machine is also available for my hospital patients and the peripheral clinics.

A lot needs to be done in the region; the past five years have indeed been challenging getting the service up and running. The population is growing rapidly; expansion in the north is going ahead at a cracking



(From left to right): Joan Normore (office assistant), Dr. Christopher Lyddell, and Nadine Glenn, R.N.

pace and this will mean a lot more demand on medical services in the region. A large percentage of the population is transient, particularly from the east of Canada, and continuity of care for this group is indeed important. It is my hope that the next few years will bring better long term rehabilitative facilities for people with musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders, improved facilities such as hydrotherapy, and hopefully, an enthusiastic new graduate to join me!

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