

## Dr Agatha Wilford 1922–2014



Dr Agatha Wilford (née Tate) was born and raised in Kenora, Ontario. After excelling in high school she attended the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto where she met her husband to be, John Wilford. Following graduation, Agatha and John were married on 22 December 1945 and interned at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Agatha and John were both officers in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps during the Second World War and were discharged in September 1946. Subsequently, they moved to Chilliwack and set up a busy general practice together. Dr Wilford was the first female doctor in Chilliwack. She worked for 8 years before retiring the first time to raise their children. She re-entered general practice in 1972 for another 7 years before retiring for good.

Dr Wilford loved nature, canoeing, gardening, reading, and writing long and newsy letters to her extended family and friends. Agatha and John also loved to travel, with their favorite places being Hawaii and Europe. But her main focus was her family—her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

With her cousin, Dorothy Ostrum Meyerhof, Agatha wrote a history of the Tate family that is in the library of several genealogy societies, includ-

ing the Archives of Ontario.

Unfortunately, Dr Wilford suffered a stroke in 2001 and had a number of health issues, which she faced with courage and dignity. The last 11 years of her life were spent in the Waverly Seniors Village where she remained a true lady in spite of her challenges. Agatha slipped away peacefully with John, her husband of 68 years, by her side. She is predeceased by her parents, Harry and Gertrude Tate, and her grandson, Johnny Wilford. She is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, one step-grandson, two great-grandchildren, and other extended family.

—Ted Wilford, MD  
Nanaimo

## Dr E. John Wilford 1921–2014



Dr E. John Wilford was born in Chengdu, China, where his parents Edward Corry Wilford (surgeon) and Claudia (musician) were missionaries. Before he left China at age 15, John became proficient in English, French, and Mandarin. He finished high school in Toronto and attended the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto where he met his bride to be, Agatha Tate.

John and Agatha were married on 22 December 1945 and interned at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. With the rest of their medical school class,

they became officers in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps during the Second World War and were discharged in September 1946. They moved to Chilliwack and set up a busy general practice. Dr Wilford maintained his practice until 1987. He continued to do locum work in Chilliwack until he was 80.

Dr Wilford was active for many years with the then-BCMA. He also committed much time to his community through Rotary, the United Church (choir and scouting), and barber shop quartets.

Never resisting a chance to be with family and friends, John was loved by many. He had a positive outlook, always a humorous quip, and seemed able to talk with anyone about anything.

For the 12 years following Agatha's stroke until she passed away in January 2014, John was by her side. Five months after Agatha's death, John suffered a stroke and, after a few days, passed away—sharp until the end, he maintained his sense of humor. He was a loving and generous husband and father, good friend to many, a respected doctor, and a role model to us all.

John was predeceased by Agatha (his wife of 68 years), his parents, two sisters, and grandson, Johnny Wilford. He is survived by his four children, seven grandchildren, one step-grandson, and two great-grandchildren.

—Ted Wilford, MD  
Nanaimo

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## Dr William James Corbett 1921–2014



On 9 October 2014, surrounded by his family's love, Dr William James Corbett passed away the way he lived his life—quietly and with dignity and class.

Born on 1 October 1921 in Plenty, a small town in Saskatchewan, Dr Corbett was raised on his parents' farm until the difficulties of the Great Depression brought the three of them to Ontario.

Jim enlisted in the RCAF as soon as the Second World War erupted. He opted for an education as his demobilization indemnity, a crossroad that he felt transformed his life. He completed his medical studies at the University of Toronto in 1951 and settled in North Vancouver in 1952, where he practised general medicine until he became medical director of Lions Gate Hospital from 1974 to 1986. He received the Greater Vancouver GP Association's GP of the Year award in 1965. He was an active member of the then-BCMA and was elected president of our provincial association in 1970.

After retiring in 1986, Dr Corbett divided his time between traveling, tending his garden, playing bridge, reading, and, most of all, caring for his family.

An avid reader and a knowledgeable historian, Dr Corbett could discuss any Canadian historical event and give all of its details, dates, and contemporary consequences. He

loved crossword puzzles and only rarely would resort to Google to find a word he could not guess. His brain was sharper than those of many of his much younger fellows. He was interested in gardening, but also knew all about aviation (a remnant of his years in the RCAF) and politics—local, provincial, federal, or international. He enjoyed playing bridge and participated in weekly card-playing sessions with his friends.

As a father and patriarch of his family he never reprimanded or disapproved, but somehow he knew how to send a subliminal message pointing in the right direction. His guidance was gentle, efficient, kind, and benevolent.

Dr Corbett was, above all, a true physician. He was the type of doctor that humanity seldom encounters—fully dedicated to his patients, respectful of his colleagues, and keen to learn about any new developments in the medical field. At 93 years of age, he did a literature search to understand the physiopathology of the anorexia he was experiencing!

My father-in-law's life and mode of practising medicine is a model, and his death a great sadness for all of us. He was a true gentleman, doing quietly what he felt was his duty and never expecting anything in exchange since, indeed, duty does not call for rewards.

He has now rejoined his beloved wife, Vera, who predeceased him in 2011 after 60 happy years together. He is survived by his four daughters, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, all of whom will miss him dearly.

Friends are invited to honor Jim with a contribution to the Lions Gate Hospital Foundation and to remember him while relaxing on the family bench—the westernmost one on the waterfront at Horseshoe Bay Park.

—Lionel Traverse, MD  
Abbotsford

## Dr Alan Ferguson Johnston 1927–2014



Dr Alan Ferguson Johnston was born on 23 December 1927 and died peacefully on 31 January 2014, surrounded by family.

Born in Calgary, Alan grew up during the Great Depression, the youngest of five children and son of a horseback doctor. Listening to his father's stories of traveling in rural southwestern Alberta by horse to deliver medical care, Alan developed an early interest in medicine. After studies in pure science at Victoria College, Craigdarroch Castle, and then UBC, he completed postgraduate training in philosophy and psychology at the University of Alberta in 1951. He then traveled to London, where he worked in the Institute of Ophthalmology, Judd Street, under W.S. Duke-Elder, on "the problem of retrolental fibroplasias," before studying medicine at University College London. He graduated with an MBBS in 1955. Following graduation, Dr Johnston worked as a house officer at St. George's Hospital in London, where he had early exposure to psychiatry in the Tavistock Clinic. Dr Johnston later moved back to Canada where he practised as a GP in Vancouver. In 1962 he returned to specialty training in psychiatry at VGH and then the 4700-bed Riverview Hospital, where he lived on-site with his wife and two infant sons. He entered private practice in psychiatry, forming the

Continued from page 501

Western Institute of Living, one of the first multidisciplinary psychiatric clinics in BC. Dr Johnston went on to have a long and fulfilling career practising adult psychiatry in Vancouver.

He and Tess were married in 1963 and four children arrived soon after. The purchase of a farm on Salt Spring Island was the start of many joyous family occasions. In retirement, Alan continued to pursue his interest in horticulture in the BC Fruit Testers Association, with his espalier work and his gardens. He and Tess traveled extensively, enjoying time together.

This devoted family man, husband, father, and friend was loved for many things, but especially because he was a wonderfully patient listener. His ability to help others arrive at new perspectives meant he was often relied upon in times of trouble or momentous decisions. Dr Johnston will be loved, always, and greatly missed by his family. He is survived by his wife, Tessa, four children, and ten grandchildren.

—Dean Johnston, MD  
Vancouver

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## Recently deceased physicians

If a BC physician you knew well is recently deceased, consider submitting a piece for our “In Memoriam” section in the *BCMJ*. Include the deceased’s dates of birth and death, full name and the name that the deceased was best known by, key hospital and professional affiliations, relevant biographical data, and a high-resolution photo. Please limit your submission to a maximum of 500 words. Send the content and photo by e-mail to [journal@doctorsofbc.ca](mailto:journal@doctorsofbc.ca).

# council on health promotion

## We’ve done a lot of good things this year

Illness prevention and health care promotion are the driving forces behind the work that Doctors of BC’s Council on Health Promotion (COHP) and its five subcommittees (Athletics and Recreation, Emergency Medical Services, Environmental Health, Geriatrics and Palliative Care, and Nutrition) undertake every year.

developed a policy paper titled *Reaching Out: Supporting Youth Mental Health in BC* ([doctorsofbc.ca/reaching-out](http://doctorsofbc.ca/reaching-out)) that encourages youth to seek out their family doctor to discuss mental health concerns, among other options. The paper also calls on health authorities to ensure GPs are informed of existing local mental health resources, calls

### As the primary advocacy body of Doctors of BC, COHP’s goal is to make a meaningful difference in the lives of British Columbians

COHP is the longest-running and largest standing committee of Doctors of BC. As the primary advocacy body of Doctors of BC, COHP’s goal is to make a meaningful difference in the lives of British Columbians through its public campaigns, policy initiatives, media interviews, and joint work with government.

Each year COHP zeros in on an issue that it feels needs greater attention. Many youth transitioning from adolescence to adulthood experience challenges, but this path can be particularly difficult for the estimated 12% to 20% of young British Columbians who suffer from mental illness. It is during this time that many mental health conditions first appear but, sadly, many of these youth do not seek help, which can lead to a lifetime of unnecessary anguish. To address this issue COHP

on government to increase system capacity, and commits to promoting educational materials for physicians.

A particularly exciting aspect to this project was the creation of a dedicated website ([OpenMindBC.ca](http://OpenMindBC.ca)), an information hub for youth and their families, doctors, other health care providers, teachers, and counselors. An abundance of excellent tools and resources developed by a range of community mental health organizations can be found here.

This year marked the fifth annual Walk With Your Doc event. Conceived by the Athletics and Recreation Committee to promote the health benefits of daily physical activity, this event grows each year. In May, 58 walks with 2700 patients walking side by side with nearly 300 doctors took place across the province. As well, now in its third year, Be Active Every Day challenges students to get moving for 60 minutes every day. In November, 4600 students took part in 38 schools encouraged by 40 doctors in 22 communi-

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*This article is the opinion of the Council on Health Promotion and has not been peer reviewed by the BCMJ Editorial Board.*