

Langley City family practice

I have spent over 25 years of my life as a family physician in Langley and have seen many changes in my community during this time. The population has more than doubled, resulting in increased traffic congestion, commercial areas, infrastructure, and recreational facilities. Langley now has every big-box retailer known to Western civilization, including Costco, Walmart, Home Depot, and the Real Canadian Superstore. What was previously a quiet drive into the central core is now a stop-and-go traffic light adventure. Despite this, Langley has been good to me. My two children were raised here and I have made many good friends over the years. I also met my wife here, twice.* I managed to build a busy family practice while

working at Langley Hospital, where I have fostered excellent relationships with many physicians and staff.

Speaking of relationships, one constant during all of this growth has been the welcome presence of the physicians with whom I work closely in our clinic. I feel so lucky and have been blessed to have shared these years with these quality individuals. Four became five, and now we are six. When I first joined the original three, I was surprised to find that our office desks were in the same room without any physical barriers to separate them. I found this lack of privacy unnerving and was concerned about confidentiality, interruptions, and noise levels. I wondered how work would get done in this open space. I shouldn't have

worried, because this environment fostered closeness and sharing. There is always someone around to bounce ideas off and listen to concerns about this patient or that issue. Complaints are shared, lightening the burden each of us carries throughout our busy practices. We also regularly laugh and joke with one another. Fridays after work are one of my weekly highlights as we settle into the weekend by sharing some drinks and snacks.

We have seen each other through illnesses, accidents, tragedies, divorces, aging parents, and so much more. These people are my rocks and I know they have my back through thick and thin. Now don't get me wrong; we've had our disagreements over the years, but they have been handled with mutual respect and care. We hear about practices that have disbanded as a result of differences and disputes. I'm not sure if it was by luck or some unseen force, but I couldn't have chosen a better group of work colleagues. I have spent more time with these people than I have with most of my family and friends, yet I don't tire of their wit, humor, compassion, caring, and support. Perhaps I have become more sentimental as I begin to think about retirement, but it has been a wonderful journey working with these excellent physicians whom I am proud to call my friends.

Joining a practice is like a marriage in many ways, so to those physicians considering joining a practice, I encourage you to choose wisely. I know I did.

—DRR

*The first time we met there was an instant connection and a feeling of electricity passing between us . . . that apparently only I felt as she doesn't remember the interaction.

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Reflections on my first year of independent practice, so far

When 1 July 2018 came around, I had done the countless paperwork and paid my dues. I finally got the okay to venture into the world of family medicine on my own. It was, and still is, an exciting time, but also a terrifying time. I spent the first few weekends of this monumental year thinking about all the cases I had seen the week prior and second guessing myself about some. I ended up calling several patients to check on how they were doing, and most of them were, first, surprised I called and, second, usually doing better, and if not, there was a plan of what to do next. This put my mind at ease somewhat. The unknown is still scary, but I know it is a part of the growing pains and transition. I'm also happy to say that my weekends are generally getting better.

Another thing I've noticed is the many remarks on my age and experience. The remarks I most often get are, "Oh, I thought I would be seeing someone . . . older," or, "You look like you are in high school!" I have not yet come up with a good response to these remarks, so it usually ends with an awkward laugh and shrug. I think most of the remarks come from

genuine surprise, but some can come across as judgmental. One patient even talked to me for a good 10 minutes before he finally asked, "When am I going to see the *real* doctor?" I could only reply, "Sorry, Mr S., I am who you are seeing today."

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There will come a time when these remarks no longer occur. I'm not sure if I'm looking forward to that or not. Nonetheless, I remind myself that my training has enabled me to help patients, so being the most professional and knowledgeable that I can be is the best response. In the meantime, I may as well take them as a compliment.

The one thing I did not truly come to understand fully until recently is that the learning never stops in medicine. Yes, mentors and teachers told me that they are constantly learning something new. But for some reason, when I was in residency, the end goal seemed to be passing the CCFP. A small part of me

thought that if I passed the exam then all the knowledge I needed for family medicine would be there, and, miraculously, between 30 June and 1 July I would become the wise, all-knowing doctor I strived to be. But I woke up on 1 July feeling like the same person I was the day before.

There are still many things I do not know, so I ask for help from colleagues, check resources, and consult specialists. I also look back and realize how much more I do know compared to only several months ago. I am more confident dealing with cases and making decisions. I was hesitant at first to teach medical students and residents because I thought I would not have much knowledge to share, but in reality, I am able to share quite a bit of knowledge and pearls I have gained along the way, despite only having been in practice for a short time.

This period of transition is an exciting time. There are finally no residency requirements to fulfill but we in turn become fully accountable for our patients. To my fellow colleagues who have also recently ventured into practice, let's continue to learn and grow together. I look forward to what lies ahead in our careers. —YS

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